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KANT'S DOCTRINE OF TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION

MICHELLE GRIER

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KANT'S DOCTRINE OF TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION

This major study of Kant provides a detailed examination of the development and function of the doctrine of transcendental illusion in his theoretical philosophy. The author shows that a theory of "illusion" plays a central role in Kant's arguments about metaphysical speculation and scientific theory. Indeed, she argues that we cannot understand Kant unless we take seriously his claim that the mind inevitably acts in accordance with ideas and principles that are "illusory." Taking this claim seriously, we can make much better sense of Kant's arguments and reach a deeper understanding of the role he allots human reason in science.

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For Scott and Marissa

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments *page* xi
Note on References and Translations xiii

Introduction 1

PART ONE: KANT'S DISCOVERY OF METAPHYSICAL ILLUSION

1 Metaphysical Error in the Precritical Works 17
The Early Works 17
The Delusion of Metaphysical Knowledge and the *Dreams* 32
The Transition from the *Dreams* to the *Dissertation* 45

2 The *Inaugural Dissertation* 48
The Distinction between Sensuality and the Intellect 49
The Theory of the Intellect 52
Illusion and the Fallacy of Subreption 57
The Principles of Harmony 64

PART TWO: FALLACIES AND ILLUSIONS IN THE *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

3 The Transcendental Employment of the Understanding and the Conflation of Appearances and Things in Themselves 69
Preliminary Remarks 71
The Transcendental Employment of the Understanding 76
The Distinction between Appearances and Things in Themselves 86
The Pretensions of Sensibility 94

4 Transcendental Illusion 101
The Sources of Dialectical Error 102
Reason as the Seat of Transcendental Illusion 117
The Transcendental Concepts of Pure Reason 130

PART THREE: THE DIALECTICAL INFERENCES OF PURE REASON

5 Rational Psychology and the Pseudorational Idea of the Soul 143
The Transcendental Idea in the Paralogism 144
The Fallacy of the First Paralogism 152
The B Edition 161
The Second and Third Paralogisms 163

6 Rational Cosmology and the Pseudoempirical Idea of the World 172
Transcendental Illusion and the Idea of the World 174
The Mathematical Antinomies 182
The Resolution to the Mathematical Antinomies 209
The Dynamical Antinomies 214

7 Rational Theology and the Pseudorational Idea of God 230
Preliminary Remarks 230
The Idea of the *Ens Realissimum* 234
Transcendental Illusion and the Unconditionally Necessary Being 252
The Ontological Argument 256

PART FOUR: ILLUSION AND SYSTEMATICITY

8 The Regulative Employment of Reason 263
Preliminary Remarks 264
The Demand for Systematic Unity 268
The Unity of Reason 279
Kant's Philosophy of Science 288
The Unifying Function of Ideas 294

Conclusion 303

Selected Bibliography 307
Index 313

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Finally, I am grateful to the editors of a number of journals for permission to reprint revised versions of material previously published. Much new material on Kant's theory of reason and the Dialectic has appeared since I first wrote the dissertation on Kant's doctrine of illusion. I have tried to accommodate some of this material while revising and expanding my work, despite *strong* inclinations to start over entirely from scratch. Material for both my Introduction and some of Chapter 5 appeared in "Illusion and Fallacy in Kant's First Paralogism," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1993): 257–282. Some of the material from Chapter 8 of this work is contained in "Kant on the Illusion of a Systematic Unity of Nature," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1997): 1–28. Similarly, portions of Chapter 6 previously appeared in "Transcendental Illusion and Transcendental Realism in Kant's Second Antinomy," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1998): 47–70. Chapter 7 contains some material presented at the Eighth International Kant Congress, held in Memphis in 1995, and appears in my "Kant's Rejection of Rational Theology," in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress,* ed. Hoke Robinson (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), 641–650. I gratefully acknowledge the editors of these journals and collections for their kind permission to reuse this material.

NOTE ON REFERENCES AND TRANSLATIONS

References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions. Quotations in English are from Norman Kemp Smith's translation, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason,* 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929). In cases where I have modified or diverged from Kemp Smith's translation, I note this in the footnotes. Passages in German are from Raymund Schmidt's German edition (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1954). All other references to Kant are to the *Gesammelte Schriften* of the Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1922) and are cited by volume and page. In those cases where a translation has been quoted or consulted, the corresponding English pagination follows the reference to the volume and page of the German text, and the distinction is marked by a semicolon. In such cases, the particular translation used is stated in the footnotes.

INTRODUCTION

> There exists, then, a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason – not one in which a bungler might entangle himself through lack of knowledge, or one which some sophist has artificially invented to confuse thinking people, but one inseparable from human reason, and which, even after its deceptiveness [*Blendwerk*] has been exposed, will not cease to play tricks with reason and continually entrap it into momentary aberrations ever and again calling for correction. (A298/B355)

The foregoing passage highlights the ostensible purpose of the Transcendental Dialectic in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* – to expose the illusion that presumably generates traditional attempts in metaphysics. Kant, of course, is well known as the philosopher who undermined the disciplines of traditional, rationalist, metaphysics. Despite the undeniable influence of his arguments on subsequent philosophical traditions, however, and despite the wealth of secondary literature devoted to these arguments, there remain serious difficulties in interpreting his claims. Part of the problem is that Kant's rejection of the metaphysical arguments is linked up with a unique theory of error. Kant refers to this unique kind of error as "transcendental illusion," and he clearly thinks that it provides an important insight in the propensities of the human mind to engage in speculative metaphysics.

Up to now there has been no sustained and detailed study devoted entirely to examining the role of the doctrine of transcendental illusion

Much of the material in this Introduction has already appeared in "Illusion and Fallacy in Kant's First Paralogism," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1993): 257–282.

in the variety of arguments in Kant's Transcendental Dialectic – an account that explains not only the nature of Kant's objections to the traditional metaphysical inquiries but also the connection between these criticisms and the more general theory of illusion. Superficially, the connection is obvious and well documented. The Dialectic itself is defined by Kant as the "logic of illusion" (A293/B350). The doctrine of illusion thus first emerges in the Dialectic along with Kant's attempt to introduce the third and presumably distinct activity of thought characteristic of "reason." Inherent in the very nature of reason, we are told, is the presumption that objects themselves conform to a rational demand for unconditioned unity. Very generally, Kant's claim is that we unavoidably move from a rational prescription to seek the ultimate explanation (and so a complete "systematic unity" of thought), to the assumption of an "unconditioned," which is given and which systematically unifies things in themselves. The identification of reason as "the seat of" (*als dem Sitze des*) transcendental illusion thus introduces a new and unique possibility for error, error that is distinct from the logical or judgmental error previously discussed in Kant's Transcendental Analytic. The doctrine of illusion thus appears throughout the Dialectic primarily in conjunction with Kant's attempt to undermine the disciplines of traditional (rationalist) metaphysics.

These considerations suggest that Kant's principle aim in the Dialectic is to critique the three central disciplines of "special" metaphysics in the rationalist tradition. Each of these (rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology) attempts to obtain knowledge of a transcendent object by means of formal (transcendental) principles. So, for example, in rational psychology one wants to arrive at substantive metaphysical conclusions about the nature, properties, and constitution of the "soul"; in rational cosmology one wants to arrive at such metaphysical conclusions about the "world"; and in rational theology one wants to do so about "God." Central to Kant's arguments is clearly the view that the metaphysical conclusions in each case are grounded in the "transcendental illusion," which is itself implicit in the very nature of human reason. Kant states the problem in the following important passage:

> These conclusions are . . . to be called pseudo-rational . . . they are not fictitious and have not arisen fortuitously, but have sprung from the very nature of reason. They are sophistications not of men, but of pure reason itself. Even the wisest of men cannot free himself from them. After

> long effort he perhaps succeeds in guarding himself from actual error; but he will never be able to free himself from the illusion [*Schein*] which unceasingly mocks and torments him. (A339/B397)

As this quotation makes clear, Kant's concern is to refute a set of arguments whose conclusions we are in some sense *constrained* to draw. Given this, he needs to show not only that the metaphysical arguments are fallacious but also how they are "rooted" in the nature of reason itself. It is precisely on this latter point, however, that Kant's arguments are commonly thought to fail. The problem is that his subsequent diagnoses of the fallacies of the metaphysical arguments seem to have nothing to do with his more general claims about an "unavoidable illusion."[1] In all cases, rather, the arguments are dismissed on the grounds that they involve an erroneous (i.e., transcendental) application of concepts. Such an account seems incompatible with the claims about illusion, for although Kant repeatedly argues that the metaphysical doctrines are products of an unavoidable, inevitable, and indispensably necessary transcendental illusion, he clearly offers his own critique as a remedy to these very same errors. As we shall see, this complaint is by now commonplace in the secondary literature and reflects the common contention that Kant's general claims about transcendental illusion are inconsistent with his particular criticisms of the fallacies involved in the dialectical syllogisms.

The problems generated by Kant's attempt to link the rejection of metaphysics to a doctrine of transcendental illusion are compounded when we turn to the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic. There Kant claims that the very same illusion that was presented to us as the ground of error is nevertheless "indispensably necessary" (A645/B673). More specifically, he argues that the "illusory" demand that an "unconditioned" is actually given, as well as the transcendental ideas of reason which express that demand (the "soul," the "world," and "God"), are required not only for morality but, indeed, for empirical investigations into nature. With this claim, Kant moves from a "nega-

1 This complaint is formulated by Patricia Kitcher, "Kant's Paralogisms," *Philosophical Review* 91, no. 4 (1982): 518; W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975); Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason,* 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), p. 457. P. F. Strawson makes essentially the same charge in connection with his discussion of the ideas of reason in *The Bounds of Sense, an Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966); see, e.g., pp. 155–161. This list is by no means exhaustive.

tive" or critical project of "limiting the pretensions to reason" to a "positive" or "constructive" effort to secure for reason some legitimate theoretical function. The problem, once again, is to make sense of Kant's position. Although many commentators have attempted to provide an interpretation that makes sense of Kant's "positive" claims about the role of reason, there continues to be no general agreement on this issue. Moreover, none of these current discussions is concerned to draw a serious connection between the principle of "systematic unity" and the doctrine of transcendental illusion.

My aim here is to elucidate the way in which the doctrine of transcendental illusion simultaneously accommodates Kant's desire to limit the metaphysical "pretensions of reason" and his attempt to defend the necessary (albeit merely regulative) role in empirical knowledge played by this illusion. I begin with a more detailed discussion of the common criticisms offered against Kant. In so doing, I hope to illustrate some of the deeper theoretical reasons Kant has for arguing for a connection between the dialectical attempts of dogmatic metaphysics and his theory of illusion. This connection, in turn, motivates my own attempt to articulate Kant's criticisms in terms of such a theory.

The Inevitability Thesis

One common complaint with respect to Kant's position has to do with what I call his "inevitability thesis," that is, his view that the fallacious inferences involved in each of the dialectical syllogisms are themselves (and because of a transcendental illusion) somehow "natural," "inevitable," and "grounded in the nature of human reason" (A341/B399, A407/B434, A570/B598). In just what sense Kant considers the dialectical inferences to be unavoidable is not immediately clear; as a result, he has been accused of succumbing to hyperbole,[2] of historical prejudice,[3] of indulging in armchair psychology,[4] and of lapsing into incoherence.[5] To be sure, these complaints are not entirely unfounded.

2 Kitcher, "Kant's Paralogisms," p. 518.

3 Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics,* p. 173.

4 Strawson suggests this when he argues (with respect to the idea of God) that there is no reason to think that the idea arises "naturally" in the way that Kant claims (Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense,* p. 222; see also pp. 215–231). Although I cannot go into this issue here, the complaint issues from the attempt to evaluate Kant's claims about the origin of the ideas of reason on "psychological" grounds. On this, see Allen Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), esp. p. 62.

5 I take it that this is essentially the point that Jonathan Bennett wishes to make in con-

Prima facie, there seems to be no basis for Kant's claim that the metaphysical conclusions are arrived at "necessarily." Certainly, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the traditional metaphysical doctrines are based simply on erroneous or "bad" argumentation, and not on some mysterious and deep-seated "unavoidable illusion." Although the fallacious arguments may have gained widespread acceptance from Kant's rationalist predecessors, it simply does not follow from this historical fact that the arguments themselves, or the conclusions drawn from these arguments, are always or necessarily encountered.

Indeed, Kant himself is ambiguous on the issue of the inevitability of the metaphysical conclusions. Such ambiguity is apparent in the previously cited passage; Kant wants to hold *both* that the erroneous metaphysical conclusions are somehow inescapable *and* that it is possible to avoid succumbing to the "actual errors" that are involved in accepting such conclusions. In making this last claim, Kant would appear to undermine his own position. *Either,* it would seem, the metaphysical conclusions are "inevitable," in which case the accompanying errors are unavoidable, *or* it is possible to correct, or avoid altogether, such errors. In the first case, the inevitability of the metaphysical conclusions would seem to "undo" Kant's entire critique, which is committed to the possibility of correcting the mistakes of traditional metaphysics through the critical procedure of transcendental reflection. In the latter case, there is little to the suggestion that the erroneous conclusions are themselves inevitable. Considerations such as these make it difficult to understand in exactly what sense, if any, the dialectical conclusions are to be regarded as unavoidable, or what Kant means by the notion of a "transcendental ground," which somehow constrains us to draw such conclusions.[6] Here, then, it appears that the only reasonable interpretation is one that downplays Kant's inevitability thesis.

Nevertheless, problems arise if we fail to consider seriously Kant's claims about the inevitability and necessity of drawing the metaphysical conclusions. In line with this, it should be noted that in all cases these conclusions involve claims about "objects" (the soul, the world, God) that, according to Kant, we must in some way think in order to achieve

nection with his rejection of Kant's attempt to explicate the fallacies of the Dialectic in terms of a general theory of reason. See *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 267–288.

6 Kant refers to a "transcendental ground" as necessitating the dialectical inferences in his discussion of the paralogisms (A341/B399). This issue is discussed in Chapter 5, in connection with Kant's rejection of rational psychology.

a completeness and systematicity of knowledge. As Allen Wood notes, the thought of such objects appears to give a certain "completeness" to our knowledge by furnishing the "unconditioned" in relation to various sets of objects that are experienced by us in some sense as "conditioned."[7] The concepts or ideas of such objects, then, function as the epistemological grounds of our knowledge of the actual objects encountered in experience.[8] Indeed, Kant goes so far as to suggest that these transcendental "maxims" of reason are necessary if we are to secure "a criterion" of even empirical truth (A651/B679). This suggests that the transcendental concepts of pure reason play some important role in the domain of empirical knowledge, and this despite Kant's frequent denial that such ideas themselves provide knowledge of anything whatsoever.

This point has been noted by Reinhard Brandt. According to him, the transcendental ideas and their "associated principles" appear to be offered in the *Critique* as "indispensable elements of the possibility of experience."[9] Brandt correctly notes that, as such, these principles must be construed as having a definite transcendental, and not merely logical, status.[10] Although Kant's specific arguments on this score cannot be evaluated until later on, it seems clear even at this point that the criticisms in the Dialectic against metaphysics cannot be read as any straightforward rejection of the conclusions that ground the postulation of transcendent objects.[11]

Kant himself does not want to reject the postulation of such "objects." His views on this issue are presented in the context of his theory

7 Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* pp. 17–18.

8 Kant is ambiguous on the issue of whether the transcendent objects represented through the ideas of reason provide ontological or merely epistemological grounds for empirical objects. See Chapters 3 and 8. For a good discussion of Kant's use of both epistemological and ontological senses of the "thing in itself," see Bernard Rousset, *La Doctrine kantienne de l'objectivité* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967), chap. 6.

9 Reinhard Brandt, "The Deductions in the Critique of Judgment: Comments on Hampshire and Horstmann," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions,* ed. Eckhart Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 178. Note that the necessary status of the ideas and principles of reason is an issue usually discussed in connection with Kant's philosophy of science. See Thomas Wartenberg, "Order through Reason," *Kant-Studien* 70 (1979): 409–424, and Gerd Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1969), esp. pp. 523–530. This topic is discussed in Chapter 8.

10 Brandt, "The Deductions in the Critique of Judgment: Comments on Hampshire and Horstmann," p. 178.

11 Robert B. Pippin recognizes this problem and discusses it in chapter 7 of his book, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), esp. pp. 193–215.

of the ideas of reason, which provides the framework within which Kant assesses and rejects the various disciplines of special metaphysics. Although Kant wants to argue against the attempt to acquire metaphysical knowledge of these objects, he continues to maintain the necessity of postulating them in thought – an approach particularly evident in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic. Having argued in relation to each of the ideas that the transcendent employment of reason is dialectical, Kant undertakes to secure for reason some "good and proper" employment (A643/B671). Here the "natural tendency" to transgress the limits of possible experience is at issue. When such an attempt is undertaken with a view to yielding knowledge of an object (i.e., transcendently), then reason can be shown to defy the very conditions required for its success, for the ideas do not have any real object corresponding to them. If, however, in passing beyond the sphere of possible experience, the ideas are deployed as devices for directing the proper employment of the understanding (i.e., regulatively), then the use of reason has positive results (it provides unity of the understanding) and is deemed "indispensably necessary" (A645/B673).

Once again, as Brandt notes, Kant seems to hold that without the ideas of reason, the acts of the understanding – and, indeed, the categories themselves – are "incoherent and useless."[12] Presumably, the usefulness of the ideas and principles of reason issues from their legislating capacity. Kant's view is that reason itself prescribes that we seek knowledge in accordance with certain goals and interests, which in turn define what will count as knowledge in the first place. Although the ideas that express these interests of reason may be "illusory," they are nevertheless taken to be necessary presuppositions in the acquisition of knowledge. This last view, which is considered in Chapter 8, reflects Kant's view that the body of knowledge is to be understood as an active "project" undertaken in light of the "subjective" interests definitive of human reason.

Given these considerations, we may distinguish between the *negative* critique of the particular metaphysical arguments and the *positive* account of the principles and maxims of reason. But it is imperative to see that these two undertakings are, for Kant, inextricably bound up with one another. His position that the ideas of reason are necessary and unavoidable means that we will forever be tempted to regard them as ob-

12 Brandt, "The Deductions in the Critique of Judgement: Comments on Hampshire and Horstmann," pp. 178–179.

jects of possible knowledge. In this case, the doctrine of transcendental illusion is absolutely central to his account of metaphysical error. Not only does the doctrine provide the framework within which Kant first introduces the problems of the Dialectic, but each of the disciplines subsequently criticized is repeatedly held to involve such illusion. The transcendental paralogism, for example, is defined as a fallacious syllogism that is "grounded in the nature of human reason, and which gives rise to an illusion which cannot be avoided" (A341/B399). Both the A and B edition versions of the paralogisms end with a general exposition of the "transcendental and yet natural illusion in the paralogisms of pure reason" (A396–397 and also B427). Lest this be assumed to be peculiar to the paralogisms, it should be noted that equal emphasis is placed on the role of transcendental illusion in Kant's criticisms of the cosmological and theological arguments as well.[13] It seems strange, then, that one is hard-pressed to find in the secondary literature any detailed, "full-scale" investigation into Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion.[14]

Transcendental Illusion

Kant generally identifies transcendental illusion with the propensity to take the subjective or logical requirement that there be a complete unity of thought to be a requirement to which "objects" considered independently of the conditions of experience (things in themselves) must conform (A297/B354). In accordance with this, Kant suggests, we move from the subjective or logical requirement for systematic unity of thought to the assumption of an "unconditioned," which is given independently of the subjective conditions of experience. It is precisely this assumption that, Kant will hold, generates metaphysical error. Central to his position are two claims: the requirement for systematic unity of

13 See, e.g., A422/B450, A484/B512, A582/B610. This list is by no means exhaustive.

14 I by no means wish to suggest that the topic of transcendental illusion has escaped discussion altogether, but only to point out that it has not received the kind of detailed attention that has succeeded in making its role in Kant's philosophy clear. I am indebted to many previous helpful discussions. See Robert Theis, "De l'illusion transcendentale," *Kant-Studien* 76 (1985): 119–137; Robert Butts, "Kant's Dialectic and the Logic of Illusion," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind*, ed. Patricia Easton, North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy, vol. 5 (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview, 1997); Karl Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). My indebtedness to these and other works will become clear in what follows.

thought is a necessary rational requirement; and such a requirement is projected by us as holding "objectively," of objects themselves. This last feature presumably accounts for the illusory nature of the error. Although Kant is rarely taken seriously on this issue, the coherence of his position would seem to depend on the claim that an "inescapable illusion" somehow necessitates the attempt to move from the conditioned to the unconditioned. Although reason's attempt to pass from the "conditioned" to the "unconditioned" is said by Kant to be "unavoidable," he maintains that the transition also generates an illegitimate application of the categories, an application that is illegitimate because it moves beyond all possible experience.

Even an abbreviated account of this illusion reveals a number of important points. First, Kant wants to use the doctrine of transcendental illusion to provide a unified account of the way in which the misapplication of the categories generates metaphysical (synthetic a priori) claims about transcendent objects. Second, despite this connection, Kant may not identify the illusion with the fallacious application of the categories. This point is made in the opening sections of the Dialectic, when Kant explicitly distinguishes between the misemployment of the categories and transcendental illusion. The former is characterized as an error in judgment, issuing from a certain misemployment of the *understanding* (cf. A296/B353); transcendental illusion, on the other hand, involves the use of the transcendent ideas, maxims, and principles of *reason* (A297/B354).

Most commentators overlook the distinction between the illusions that ground the fallacies of the Dialectic and the actual fallacies themselves.[15] Indeed, only on the assumption that the two are the same, or are supposed to explain the very same error, do the charges of inconsistency make any sense. Accordingly, I hope to show that Kant's arguments require that we draw a distinction between transcendental illusion and the fallacies that presumably emerge in conjunction with it. Such a distinction, in turn, suggests an obvious resolution to the prob-

15 Thus, as we have seen, Kant is oftentimes accused of inconsistency precisely because his description of the illusion is not the same as his account of the fallacies. I have already mentioned Patricia Kitcher (see *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990], p. 185) and Kemp Smith (*Commentary,* p. 457). However, the failure to distinguish the illusions and the fallacies is fairly widespread, even among Kant's defenders. See Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) pp. 282–283; Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* p. 76; Karl Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 55–57.

lems encountered in connection with Kant's inevitability thesis; for although the illusions of the Dialectic are "inescapable," "inevitable," and "necessary,"[16] the fallacies or judgmental errors inherent in the metaphysical arguments are not. That Kant wants to distinguish between the illusions and the fallacies of the Dialectic is further evidenced by his division of the Dialectic into two books. Whereas the first of these identifies and accounts for the transcendental concepts of pure reason (the ideas), the second is explicitly concerned to critique the dialectical (fallacious) inferences drawn in accordance with such "necessary ideas" (A309/B366).

The interpretation presented here operates on the assumption that, for Kant, transcendental illusion is not necessarily or in itself deceptive, although, in combination with a transcendental misapplication of the categories, it grounds certain fallacious inferences that are.[17] That Kant does not consider the unavoidable illusion to be in itself or necessarily deceptive is clear from his frequent use of optical analogies. Consider the following:

> Transcendental Illusion [*Schein*] . . . does not cease even after it has been detected and its invalidity clearly revealed by transcendental criticism. . . . This is an illusion [*Illusion*] which can no more be prevented than we can prevent the sea from appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore; . . . or to cite a still better example, than the astronomer can prevent the moon from appearing larger at its rising, although he is not deceived [*betrogen*] by this illusion. (A297/B354)

> The transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with exposing the illusion [*Schein*] of transcendent judgments, and at the same time take precautions that we be not deceived [*betruge*] by it. (A298/B355)

Note that while Kant considers the illusion that grounds the metaphysical move to the idea of the unconditioned to be both unavoidable and epistemologically necessary, he refers to this idea as a "*focus imaginarious,*" suggesting that it functions merely as a theoretical "point" toward which our inquiries are to be directed (A645/B673). Accordingly,

16 At A298/B355 Kant explicitly claims that it is the illusion that is natural and inevitable. I hope to show that this is his consistently held view.

17 Meerbote distinguishes between deceiving and nondeceiving semblance in his introduction to the translation of Kant's "Concerning Sensory Illusion and Poetic Fiction." See *Kant's Latin Writings, Translations, Commentaries and Notes,* ed. L. W. Beck (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 193–201.

Kant assigns to the ideas of the unconditioned the positive function of providing systematic unity to the knowledge given through the real use of the understanding. This positive function is presumably itself grounded in the necessary illusion according to which the principles or ideas of reason are taken to have some kind of objective, albeit merely regulative, status. Indeed, Kant claims not only, as we have seen, that the transcendental ideas and principles of reason are indispensably necessary, but that their illusory status is as well. Again, Kant deploys an optical analogy, arguing that just as the optical illusion involved in mirror vision is necessary for the "seeing" of things that lie behind our backs, so too transcendental illusion is necessary for the "knowing" of things that lie beyond our particular experiences (A645/B673). In connection with this, Kant argues for the necessity of assuming principles that he had already characterized as illusory:

> It is indeed difficult to understand how there can be a logical principle by which reason prescribes the unity of rules, unless we also presuppose a transcendental principle whereby such a systematic unity is *a priori* assumed to be necessarily inherent in the objects. . . . In order, therefore, to secure an empirical criterion [of truth] we have no option save to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679)

These kinds of passages have served to confound commentators in their attempts to understand the role of reason and its "illusions" in Kant's philosophy. In the present work, I hope to make some sense of these otherwise confusing issues, for it seems that any effort to understand Kant's theory of reason must eventually come to grips with his effort to argue for the necessity of the illusion that simultaneously entraps us in metaphysical speculation and yet, somehow, makes knowledge possible.

An examination of this kind directs our attention not just to the diagnosis of the errors involved in the metaphysical arguments but to the source of such errors. There is abundant evidence that Kant took the project of revealing the transcendental grounds or sources of error to be far more important than the identification of error in its own right. Thus, in his discussion of the ground for the errors in rational theology, Kant tells us that "merely to describe the procedure of our reason and its dialectic does not suffice; we must also endeavor to discover the sources of this dialectic, that we may be able to explain, as a phenomenon of the understanding, the illusion to which it has given rise" (A581/B609). This suggestion, that Kant's aim is to illuminate the tran-

scendental sources of error, is confirmed in the *Lectures on Logic,* where Kant ostensibly distinguishes his own attempts to disclose illusion as *the source* of error from the refutation of error itself, arguing that a "far greater service to truth" is undertaken by exposing the illusions that ground errors in traditional philosophical arguments.[18] Indeed, what makes Kant's "Dialectic" a "Transcendental Dialectic" is precisely its emphasis on identifying the transcendental conditions under which error is produced in the first place. Short of doing this, we are left with a mere catalog of errors, something Kant clearly does not intend. I submit that Kant's effort to provide a transcendental account of error is precisely what yields the doctrine of transcendental illusion. As such, the doctrine of transcendental illusion highlights an important aspect of Kant's theory of the mind and clarifies many of his views about the status of scientific principles and theories.

Insofar as my aim is to clarify the role of Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion in the Dialectic, and to demonstrate a distinction between this doctrine and Kant's diagnoses of the judgmental errors contained in the metaphysical arguments, I pass over what for some have become central issues in Kant's Dialectic. For example, I discuss Kant's claims about the compatibility of freedom and mechanistic causality in the third antinomy only very briefly. Similarly, my discussion of the paralogisms of pure reason aims at illuminating the role of the doctrine of transcendental illusion in Kant's rejection of rational psychology. Consequently, I do not attend at length to issues currently deemed by many to be important, to wit: whether Kant's theory of the mind bears on any substantive issues in contemporary dialogues about mind or consciousness. My intention is not to diminish the importance or philosophical relevance of these other issues, but simply to suggest that Kant's own arguments can be clarified considerably by attending to the theory of illusion that grounds them. Moreover, because Kant appeals to this very same doctrine of transcendental illusion in his other works, I submit that this study may also prove to be fruitful in our attempts to understand the "Dialectics" contained in Kant's other texts (e.g., the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*).[19]

18 See the *Jasche Logic,* trans. Michael Young, in the *Lectures on Logic* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant,* trans. and ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 562.

19 In the *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant explicitly appeals to the doctrine of illusion (see 5:107–114). Similarly, Kant again appeals to the notion of an unavoidable and natural illusion in the Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgment in the *Critique of Judgment* (see

The present work is divided into four parts. Part I focuses on the writings that precede the *Critique*. As I hope to show, Kant's discovery of transcendental illusion was grounded in his search for the proper method for metaphysics, and the consequent recognition that problems about method are bound up with the limited nature of our faculties of knowledge. Moreover, the doctrine of illusion provides a uniquely Kantian contribution to the methodological debate going on at the time; for whereas other thinkers (e.g., Lambert, Crusius) anticipated and shared in Kant's criticisms of the attempt to deploy formal analysis as the basis for metaphysical knowledge, Kant also attempts to seek the source of metaphysics in the very nature of our cognitive faculties. In Part II, I undertake an examination of the theories of judgmental error and illusion as they are presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This provides the basis, in Part III, for a detailed examination of the "dialectical" inferences of pure reason (i.e., the paralogisms, the antinomies, and the ideal). In Part IV, I turn to a consideration of the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, in which Kant attempts to defend the positive use of the ideas and principles (and indeed the illusion) of reason.

5:339–340). Kant's appeal to the doctrine of illusion in each of these texts suggests that an examination of transcendental illusion as it occurs in the theoretical philosophy might be illuminating with respect to Kant's other works as well.

I

KANT'S DISCOVERY OF METAPHYSICAL ILLUSION

1

METAPHYSICAL ERROR IN THE PRECRITICAL WORKS

Much, of course, can be said of Kant's precritical development. The quantity of works and the broad range of topics with which he was concerned make it virtually impossible to summarize any one line of thought, and I do not intend to provide such a summary. Nevertheless, it is certainly uncontroversial to start with the fact that recurrent throughout these early writings is the attempt to find a method appropriate for metaphysics. Thus, in this chapter I argue that Kant's discovery of transcendental illusion was broadly grounded in this search for method and the consequent recognition that problems about method are bound up with the limited nature of our faculties of knowledge. The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I sketch out some of those themes in Kant's early precritical writings that are relevant to his subsequent theories of metaphysical delusion and illusion; second, I examine Kant's use of the notion of delusion as generating metaphysical error, a notion, as we shall see, that figures predominantly in the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (*Träume eines Geistsehers* [1765]); and, third, I review some of Kant's correspondence throughout the 1760s.

The Early Works

It is commonly noted that Kant's concern to secure the proper method for metaphysics issued from a long-standing debate over the respective virtues of the deductive (mathematical) method employed by the rationalist metaphysicians (Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff) and those of the inductive method advocated by the Newtonians.[1] In essence, the debate

1 H. J. de Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought,* trans. by A. R. K. Duncan (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 7. For a more detailed discussion, see de

centered on determining the appropriateness of using the deductive method in an attempt to arrive at truths about reality. The rationalist metaphysicians sought to construct a metaphysical-physical system of the world by deducing truths a priori from concepts alone, whereas the Newtonians generally held that the proper method for acquiring knowledge of the real consisted in starting from observable phenomena and proceeding, by experiment, to discover the causal relations connecting such phenomena.

In general, Kant's precritical writings reflect three principal aims in relation to this methodological debate: first, the recurrent attempt to articulate the problems associated with the use of the deductive method in metaphysics (basically, Kant's position is that the attempt to deduce knowledge about "the real" simply from concepts and/or formal principles entails both the misuse of such concepts and principles and their conflation with what we may here call "material" ones); second, his attempt to provide an account of why and how metaphysics as a discipline is particularly susceptible to such errors; and third, and most important, his suggestion that despite their erroneous nature, the faulty judgments of metaphysics are nevertheless compelling. Indeed, Kant increasingly comes to view the errors of metaphysics as issuing from the very nature of our cognitive faculties. All of these broad concerns are carried over into the *Critique,* where they provide the basis for Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion.

Kant's concern to identify the fundamental principles governing metaphysical inquiries is already evidenced in the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755.[2] The stated aim of the *Dilucidatio* is to elucidate the fundamental principles of knowledge and, in conjunction with this, both to refute those spurious principles which have in the past tainted metaphysics and to establish the proper principles for proceeding in that discipline (*Diluc.* 1:387; 5). These "proper principles" include the principles of identity and contradiction, as well as the principles of "determining ground" (sufficient reason), succession, and coexistence. The majority of the discussion centers on Kant's view of the principle of the determining ground and on the way in which the latter generates the prin-

Vleeschauwer, *La Déduction transcendentale dans l'oeuvre de Kant,* 3 vols (Paris: Leroux, 1934–1937).

2 *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio* (2:385–416). Citations in English are from David Walford's translation in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 5–37.

ciples of succession and coexistence. In relation to these principles, Kant clearly has in mind specific metaphysical issues that relate to God's existence and the theory of physical influx.[3] Nevertheless, it seems clear that his elaboration of these issues is nested in a certain methodological concern. In this connection it is instructive to consider Kant's critique of two principles fundamental to Wolffian metaphysics: the principles of contradiction and "sufficient reason." Very generally, Kant's aim is to undermine the status that each of these principles had been assigned by the Wolffians.

Kant's first target appears to be the view that the principle of contradiction is the unique, absolutely first, and universal principle of all truth. The principle is formulated as follows: *"It is impossible that the same thing should simultaneously be and not be"* (*Diluc.* 1:391; 9–10). Far from its being the ultimate and sole basis for metaphysical knowledge, Kant argues that the principle of contradiction actually presupposes the principle of identity. The principle of identity, in turn, states that *"Whatever is, is; whatever is not, is not"* (*Diluc.* 1:389; 7). As such, the principle of identity is itself a combination of two other ("twin") principles, one affirmative and one negative. Not only does this undermine the Wolffian assumption that the principle of contradiction is most fundamental, but it challenges the suggestion that there is one unique, universal, and "first" principle in metaphysics in the first place (*Diluc.* 1:388; 6).

Accordingly, it is possible to see why Kant objects to the assumption that the principle of contradiction is the fundamental principle in metaphysics. For one thing, the principle is purely negative, and merely defines the "impossible." According to Kant, we cannot assert truths from the impossibility of their opposites unless we also presuppose another mediating, and affirmative, principle, to wit: *"Everything of which the opposite is false is true"* (*Diluc.* 1:390–391; 9). Kant's point, of course, is that in the attempt to use the principle of contradiction as the one, sole, absolutely first, and universal principle of all truths (*Diluc.* 1:388; 9), the metaphysician implicitly slides from a purely negative principle to an affirmative judgment. Indeed, to the extent that one hopes to deduce any positive truths from the principle of contradiction, one *must* adopt the other, affirmative judgment. Kant's point serves both to un-

3 For a carefully constructed discussion of these issues, and particularly of Kant's concern over the theory of physical influx, see Alison Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,* North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy, vol. 3 (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview, 1993), pp. 25–42.

derscore the purely negative status of the principle of contradiction and to challenge the methodological presumptions that generate its improper use as a tool for deducing truths about reality.

Kant's efforts to demonstrate the more fundamental nature of the principle of identity reflect a concern to illuminate the most basic laws governing the use of human reason. In arguing for the precedence of the "principle" of identity, Kant in effect suggests that all reasoning aims at "uncovering" the identity between the concepts of the subject and predicate in propositions (*Diluc.* 1:391; 10). When there is an agreement or harmony (*convenientia*) between the concepts of the subject and the predicate in a proposition, the proposition is true (1:389; 7). And indeed, Kant's position is that the principle of contradiction also presupposes this aim of reason, itself expressed by the principle of identity. Given that he takes the activity of reasoning to be driven or motivated by a desire to discover relations of identity, Kant additionally suggests that the human mind is, by its own nature, compelled to operate in accordance with it:

> For the mind, even though it is not instructed as to the existence of such a principle, cannot but employ it everywhere, doing so spontaneously and in virtue of a certain necessity of its nature. But is it not for that reason the case that tracing the chain of truths to its final link is a subject which deserves to be investigated? And certainly an investigation such as this, which enquires more deeply into the law which governs the reasoning of our mind is not to be despised. (1:391; 10 [Scholium])

The principle of identity, it appears, indicates something about the limited nature of human reason, or "reasoning itself," because God does not represent in accordance with such a principle:

> Since all our reasoning amounts to uncovering the identity between the predicate and the subject, either in itself or in relation to other things, as is apparent from the ultimate rule of truths, it can be seen that God has no need of reasoning, for, since all things are exposed in the clearest possible way to his gaze, it is the same act of representation which presents to his understanding the things which are in agreement and those which are not. Nor does God need the analysis which is made necessary for us by the night which darkens our intelligence. (1:391; 10)

These inquiries into the laws that govern human reasoning increasingly come to occupy Kant's thought. Indeed, it will become clear later that the task undertaken in the *Dilucidatio* (to elucidate the fundamen-

tal principles of knowledge and to undermine any improper use of those which may be generative of metaphysical error) progressively develops into an account of those kinds of faulty judgments which characterize the compelling yet erroneous arguments of rationalist metaphysics. In turn, the attempt to trace these faulty judgments back to their source in the human mind ultimately leads Kant to the discovery of an "illusion" which somehow constrains us in our reasoning to draw the invalid metaphysical conclusions. Although the *Dilucidatio* precedes Kant's discovery of the analytic-synthetic distinction, his discussion of the principle of contradiction clearly evidences a concern to argue that negative principles cannot be used, by themselves alone, to "extend our knowledge."

One significant step in this process is taken as Kant criticizes the Wolffian principle of sufficient reason. The central complaint has to do with the fact that the principle had been unjustifiably elevated to a status of complete universality (and hence applicability); causality itself was subordinated to it as the "sufficient reason" of becoming. In this way, the Wolffians clearly took reason itself to be determinative of actual existence. Objections to the use of the principle of sufficient reason as a metaphysical tool were not unique to Kant. Crusius, for example, had already targeted it in his criticism of the "metaphysical mathematism" of the Wolffians.[4] Accordingly, Crusius had argued for a distinction that was designed to undermine the attempt to deduce truths concerning existence simply from formal or logical principles. The distinction was between "logical" and "real" reason; the latter alone, Crusius contended, was to be identified with causality.

Like Crusius, Kant argues for a distinction between two different senses of the principle of sufficient reason, which he (Kant) prefers to refer to as the principle of the *determining reason,* or *ground:* the *ratio fiendi* (the determining ground of being or becoming), and the *ratio cognoscendi* (the determining ground of knowing) (cf. *Diluc.* 1:391–392; 221). According to Kant, the *ratio fiendi* determines the existence of something, while the *ratio cognoscendi* determines our knowledge of it. This distinction clearly foreshadows various other distinctions crucial both to Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion and to his criticisms of the arguments of special metaphysics. Most notable among these is the distinction between logical possibility (conceivability) and real possibility. For the present, however, we need note the way in which the distinction undermines the Wolffian definition of reason.

4 See de Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought,* pp. 11–12.

According to Wolff, a ground is "that by reference to which it is possible to understand why something should rather be than not be" (*Diluc.* 1:393; 13). In response to this, Kant argues that Wolff's definition is problematic precisely because stating why a thing *is* rather than *is not* is tantamount to stating a *ground:* "for although the little expression 'why' may seem sufficiently adapted to common sense to be deemed capable of inclusion in a definition, it, nonetheless, in its turn, tacitly involves the concept of a ground" (ibid.). Hence, according to Kant, Wolff's definition is properly explicated as follows: "A ground is that by reference to which it is possible to understand *for which ground* something should be rather than not be" (1:393; 221). Although this suggests that Kant takes the problem with Wolff's definition to be that it is circular, his real objection is that there is an equivocation in the use of the term "ground": only if we accept, along with Wolff, that the *same ground* makes the two kinds of determination are we left with a circular definition. If we accept Kant's distinction between the ground of being and the ground of knowing, however, it is clear that the problem with Wolff's definition is that in the first instance the ground in question is that of knowing, whereas in the second it is the ground of being. Kant's point, then, is that, in conflating "logical" (epistemological) with "real" (metaphysical) grounds, Wolff mistakenly grants causal efficacy to merely epistemological ground.[5] It is quite characteristic of Kant to try to show that metaphysical error involves inferences that draw material or objective conclusions from logical or subjective principles. Although the principles themselves may be necessary, any attempt to extend their use by deducing material claims is delusive.

The claim that the ground of knowing is limited and cannot determine the existence of things provides the basis for Kant's criticisms of the ontological argument. Briefly, Kant's claim is that proponents of the ontological argument confuse logical (ideal) existence with real existence. More precisely, they begin by forming the concept of an *ens realissimum,* a supremely perfect being; but because the concept of such a being is by definition that of a being that contains all reality, they conclude that existence must (necessarily) be predicated of the *ens realissimum.* According to Kant, however, the *ens realissimum,* qua rational construct (concept) can only be claimed to have ideal and not real ex-

5 Kant explicitly criticizes this conflation of "logical" and "real" reason, and the consequent assumption that logical reason is sufficient to determine the existence of things. See, e.g., *Diluc.* 1:394; 222.

istence (1:394–395; 223). To demonstrate that the *ens realissimum* qua being has (real) existence, one would first, according to Kant, have to prove that the concept of such a being itself had reality: "in framing the concept of a certain Being, which we call God, we have determined that concept in such a fashion that existence is included in it. If, then, the concept which we have conceived in advance is true, then it is also true that God exists" (1:395; 15).

Kant's criticism of the ontological argument may certainly be viewed as anticipating his later rejection of the attempt to use the deductive method in metaphysics. Indeed, in a work written eight years after the *Dilucidatio, The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* of 1763 (hereafter the *Beweisgrund*),[6] Kant explicitly links his rejection of the ontological argument to the rejection of such a method (cf. 2:68, 48–49, and 2:71; 54–55). The work itself appears during a stage in the development in Kant's thinking which de Vleeschauwer has referred to as Kant's "empiricism." According to de Vleeschauwer, the writings of this period are generally unified by one common theme – that the synthetic, mathematical (Cartesian) method of the Wolffians is inappropriate for metaphysical inquiries.[7] Instead, Kant promotes the analytic method used by the Newtonian physicists.

In the *Beweisgrund,* as earlier, Kant's criticism of the ontological argument focuses on the attempt to deduce the existence of God from the concept of a supremely real being. Although Kant explicitly targets Descartes's ontological argument in the *Beweisgrund,* it is clear that his criticisms apply equally to anyone who attempts to deduce the actual existence of God simply from the concept of the *ens realissimum.*[8] Nevertheless, Kant offers a number of distinct new criticisms of the argument in the *Beweisgrund.* The first concerns the celebrated claim that "existence is not a (real) predicate" (cf. *Beweis.* 2:72–73; 117–118). It follows from this fact, of course, that we cannot deduce existence (actuality) simply from the concept of the *ens realissimum* (or presumably any other concept) by means of the principle of contradiction – that is, the formal analysis of the subject concept simply cannot yield any claims as to the existence of the subject itself. In this, Kant draws on some earlier conclusions from his "essay on syllogisms" (*Die falsche Spitzfindigkeit*

6 2:63–164. Citations in English are from *The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God,* trans. Gordon Treash (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

7 See de Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought,* p. 29.

8 Gordon Treash discusses this in his introduction to the text; see *The One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God,* pp. 9–32.

der vier syllogistischen Figuren erwiesen), where he had argued that analysis is not by itself capable of arriving at truths concerning existing things.[9] Obviously, this position undermines the traditional attempt to deduce the "property" of existence from the analysis of the concept of perfection.

In addition to this, Kant develops a distinction between "logical" and "real" possibility that serves to undercut the traditional conception, according to which whatever is simply noncontradictory is thereby really possible. In the case at hand, Kant argues that noncontradiction serves merely as the criterion for *logical* possibility, so that an entity that is self-contradictory, or internally inconsistent, is logically impossible (*Beweis.* 2:77; 122). Apparently following Baumgarten, Kant identifies such logical or formal impossibility with "repugnance" and "inconceivability."[10] In this way, the logically possible literally coincides with the thinkable, representable, or conceivable. Kant argues, however, that the absence of contradiction simply points to the *form,* or formal element, of possibility. In addition to this, he claims, there is the matter, data, or the real element of possibility (*Beweis.* 2:77–78; 122–123). Kant's point is that "possibility disappears not only when an internal contradiction, as the logical element of impossibility, is present, but *also* when there exists no material element, no datum, to be thought" (2:78; 123). Indeed, Kant suggests that in the case where our concepts are empty, or denote nothing, the possibility of the objects for which such concepts are the data is an illusion (*Blendwerke*) (*Beweis.* 2:80; 125; cf. 72–73). Implicit in Kant's position, then, is the view that the conflation of logical with real possibility generates an illusion. More specifically, given this conflation, any object that is merely conceivable is, in an illusory fashion, taken to be really possible. To avoid this illusion, Kant establishes a distinction between conceivability and real possibility. Such a distinction serves as the basis for many of Kant's subsequent criticisms of metaphysical error. In accordance with this distinction, moreover, Kant presents his position vis-à-vis the only possible basis for any demonstration of God's existence.

As in the *Dilucidatio,* Kant seeks to establish the necessary existence of the *ens realissimum* by showing that such a being is a necessary con-

9 See 2:45–62. Kant identifies reason with the activity of syllogistic inference, an identification that plays a central role in the Dialectic of the *Critique.* Citations of this essay in English are from Walford's translation in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770,* pp. 85–105.

10 For a discussion of this, see Gordon Treash's introduction to the *Beweisgrund,* pp. 19–21.

dition for all possibility in general. Briefly, Kant's claim is that all possibility presupposes something actual in and through which the "thinkable" must and can be given.[11] To be sure, even though Kant rejects the ontological argument, he nevertheless remains committed to establishing the necessary existence of the *ens realissimum*. As in the *Dilucidatio,* however, Kant criticizes the ontological argument for attempting to deduce this necessary (real) existence simply from the concept of the *ens realissimum* itself. The argument gets its momentum from Kant's rejection of the traditional identification of "being" with "reality." His position is that our ability to identify (conceptually) the reality (possible predicates) of a thing through analysis leads to no justified claim that the thing exists. For Kant, being is instead understood in terms of the act of "positing" an object that corresponds to a concept. This view, of course, is linked up with the aforementioned denial that being is a real predicate. Relevant here is the fact that such a view effectively undermines the assumption that we can know with certainty that there are particular "beings" simply because their nonexistence is formally contradictory.

These considerations illuminate, in a preliminary way, why Kant would want to say that metaphysics as a discipline is unsuited to the deductive method. The problem for Kant has to do with the fact that whereas metaphysics is supposed to be concerned with the discovery of truths about "really existing things," formal or logical concepts or principles by themselves do not "deductively yield" such truths. Kant further wants to argue, however, that there are other rather specific reasons why the deductive method fails in metaphysics, such reasons having to do with the source and kind of the concepts with which the metaphysician is concerned. This view is best articulated in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral,* of 1764, explicitly devoted to establishing the proper method in metaphysics.[12]

Kant has two very general aims in mind in the *Deutlichkeit*. First, he is concerned to articulate the inherent differences between the disciplines of mathematics and philosophy-metaphysics. Second, he wants to argue that because of these differences, the use of the (mathemati-

11 For a discussion of this point, see Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 67.

12 *KantsWerke,* Akademie-Textausgabe (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 2:273–302. Citations in English are from *Kant: Selected Pre-Critical Writings and Correspondence with Beck,* trans. G. B. Kerferd and D. E. Walford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), pp. 4–35.

cal) deductive method in metaphysics is generally inappropriate. In fact, he suggests that the use of such a method is responsible for many of its errors. In relation to this last claim, Kant offers what appears to be an account of metaphysical error. I shall thus be primarily concerned with the second concern. First, however, it is important to summarize very briefly Kant's position with respect to the major differences between philosophy and mathematics.

Kant maintains that philosophy and mathematics must differ in method for each of the following reasons:

1 The process of reaching definitions differs in the two disciplines (2:277–278; 6–8).
2 The method of proof (deriving conclusions) differs in the two disciplines (2:278–279; 8–10).
3 The nature of the concepts employed differs in the two disciplines (2:280–282;10–13).
4 The respective objects differ in the two disciplines (2:282–283; 13–14).

According to Kant, general concepts are produced in mathematics through an arbitrary connection, or synthesis (*Deutlichkeit* 2:277; 6). Accordingly, the mathematician always begins with a definition. The concept thus expressed originates with the definition itself and is not given to the mathematician prior to his definitional articulation of it. In Kant's words, "in mathematics I have no concept of an object until the definition creates it" (2:283; 14). As a result, no concepts are "unanalyzable" in mathematics.[13] On the basis of such definitions, the mathematician proceeds to demonstrate the various mathematical truths. The method for such proofs always involves the use of concrete symbols. In arithmetic, for example, the mathematician explicitly considers arithmetic symbols (rather than the "objects" that such symbols signify) and then proceeds by means of transformation rules to derive certain conclusions. Similarly, in geometry the mathematician employs figures (e.g., drawings). In either case, mathematical truths, while themselves universal, are always demonstrated concretely, in individual instances.

Because the starting point is a definition, and such definitions contain only what has been explicitly put into them, we can be certain,

13 Actually, Kant does allow for some "unanalyzable" concepts, these being metamathematical ones. Strictly speaking, however, they are said to be philosophical concepts.

given the trustworthiness of our transformation rules, that proceeding deductively from these definitions will yield truths. Such certainty is increased by the "intuitive" nature of the knowledge: mathematical signs are "sensuous epistemological tools" (*Deutlichkeit* 2:292; 24) that allow us to avoid the omission of any important steps in the proof procedure. Philosophy differs on all counts from mathematics. The philosopher begins with certain data (indeterminate, confused concepts) that are given *to* him. Note that in working with concepts that are given to him, the philosopher's "data base" is much more extensive and indeterminate than the mathematician's. The former's task is to clarify these concepts by analysis in order to *yield,* where possible, adequate definitions. Such analysis is deemed necessary as the first step in philosophical demonstrations, because both the clarity of the ultimate knowledge and the trustworthiness of the philosopher's deductions are absolutely dependent on his careful delineation of the concepts in question.

Because the philosopher, unlike the mathematician, takes concepts that are given to her confusedly, and because it is incumbent upon her to clarify these concepts, her task is deemed more difficult than the mathematician's (2:282; 13). Indeed, it follows from this fact alone that philosophy, and particularly metaphysics, cannot employ the deductive mathematical method; metaphysics is the science of existing things, and the philosopher cannot hope to demonstrate all metaphysical truths from a few abstract concepts. Here Kant distinguishes between merely formal principles (identity, contradiction) and material principles. Material principles cannot be "proved." Thus Kant, following Crusius, criticizes philosophers for concerning themselves solely with formal principles of knowledge and attempting to construct a metaphysical system on the basis of them.[14] Kant's claim is that there are an indefinite number of material truths that are given to the philosopher and from which she must proceed (2:295; 28; cf. 2:82; 13). In so doing, the philosopher is called upon to adopt the Newtonian method:

> The true method of metaphysics is basically the same as that introduced by *Newton* into natural science. . . . It is there said that the rules, according to which certain natural phenomena occur, should be sought by means of certain experience. . . . Involved natural occurrences are ex-

14 Although Kant agrees with Crusius on this general issue, it is important to note that he takes issue with many of the ostensibly "certain" propositions that Crusius advances. Most particularly, Kant criticizes Crusius's claim that "What I cannot think of as other than true, is true" (cf. 2:295; 28).

> plained, when it is clearly shown how they are contained under these well proved rules. It is exactly the same in metaphysics: by means of certain inner experience . . . you ought to seek out those characteristics which certainly lie in the concept of any general condition.(2:286; 17–18)

Note that Kant's primary purpose in demonstrating the inadequacy of the mathematical method for metaphysical inquiry is to eliminate those *deceptive inferences* generated by a metaphysics that is constructed in accordance with such a method. Such inferences are drawn from "definitions" that the metaphysician hastily and mistakenly posits in order to force the discipline to fit the mathematical model. Toward this, Kant undertakes to "make it evident how superficial the proofs of metaphysicians are when, according to custom, they confidently draw inferences from the explanation, once laid down as foundation – inferences that are immediately lost, if the definition is deceptive [*trügt*]" (2:288; 19).

As an example of these "superficial proofs," Kant cites the metaphysician's argument against immediate attraction at a distance. The metaphysician begins with the "definition" of contact, according to which he claims that "the immediate, reciprocal presence of two bodies is contact." The argument proceeds as follows:

1 The immediate reciprocal presence of two bodies is contact (def.).
2 When two bodies immediately affect each other, then they touch each other.
3 Things that touch each other are not distant from each other.
4 Therefore, two bodies never affect each other immediately at a distance. (cf. 2:288; 20)

According to Kant, the argument is problematic precisely because the definition is "surreptitious" (*erschlichen*; 2:288; 20); not every immediate presence, Kant claims, is a contact, but only that immediate presence which takes place by means of impenetrability (2: 288; 20). Here, Kant is clearly concerned to note that the foregoing definition fails to take into consideration the possibility of an immediate influence exerted by things that are not in direct physical contact with that on which they exert an influence. (e.g., souls).[15] Insofar as the definition ex-

15 For an extended discussion on these issues, see Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy*.

cludes this possibility, the conclusion drawn from it is spurious. Kant repeatedly states that faulty arguments of this kind are generated in metaphysics because of the metaphysician's tendency to give explanation (definitions) at the beginning and "blithely" to make inferences from them (cf. 2:289; 21). This he does in order to conform to the demands of the mathematical method. But, as we have seen, the concepts available to the metaphysician do not allow for such a procedure. Kant states the problem as follows:

> Mistakes are not originated merely by not knowing certain things, but by taking it upon oneself to make judgments, although one does not yet know everything requisite for a judgment. A great number of falsehoods, indeed, almost the whole totality of them, owe their origin to this latter precipitateness. Some predicates are known with certainty of a thing. Good! Make them the basis of your inferences. . . . But you are set on a definition. Nonetheless you are not certain that you know everything requisite to a definition, and since you still venture a definition, . . . you fall into error. It is thus possible to avoid errors, if one seeks out certain and clear knowledge, without . . . pretending . . . to definitions. (2:293; 25)

Against the background of this somewhat Cartesian demand that we draw inferences only from what is clearly and distinctly conceived, Kant explicitly rejects the Cartesian method of proceeding deductively. Part of the problem stems from the fact that clear and distinct knowledge might nevertheless remain incomplete. We might clearly and distinctly perceive certain characteristic marks in a thing and yet remain ignorant of others. In such a case, the presumption of exhaustively defining any object in terms of our own current knowledge might lead to serious omissions. This problem is exacerbated in metaphysics by the fact that the philosopher, unlike the mathematician, is not allowed the use of "sensuous epistemological tools" (2:292; 24). The signs used by her are in all cases "words." Kant suggests that the philosopher's dependence on words, as signs for philosophical inquiry, make her particularly vulnerable to error. In the first place,

> [Words] can neither show, in their composition, the parts of the concepts out of which the whole idea, indicated by the word, consists; nor can they show in their combinations the relations of philosophical thoughts. Thus . . . one must have the matter itself before one's eyes and one is obliged to conceive the universal abstractly, without being able to avail oneself of that important facility: namely handling the individual symbols themselves, instead of the universal concepts of things. (2:279; 9)

In metaphysics, such reliance on words can be particularly dangerous; the meaning of words is fixed through common usage, which is unreliable because the same word can be used to designate distinct concepts. We have already seen an example of this in Wolff's definition of "reason," where the same term was used to signify both the reason or ground of knowing and the reason or ground of becoming. Because metaphysics begins with concepts of great abstractness and difficulty ("possibility and existence in general," "necessity and contingency," etc.), particular attention must be paid in order not to succumb to the "many imperceptible corruptions in use" of the words signifying these concepts (2:289; 21).

Kant's criticism is not strictly speaking (or solely) one having to do with semantics. The particular problems associated with the nature of the signs (words) used by the metaphysician have already been discussed. In addition to these, however, Kant provides a more detailed discussion of the problems with the metaphysical concepts themselves, problems that, in turn, can be seen to promote the incorrect signification of such concepts. As noted earlier, the metaphysical concepts are themselves highly abstract. According to Kant, the aforementioned likelihood that characteristics actually belonging to such a concept will escape our notice is great. Moreover, this tendency to deny of a thing characteristics that really belong to its "complete discrimination" is primarily responsible for errors in metaphysics. In order to understand the latter claim, it is important to consider what he says about philosophical certainty.

Kant first offers, as a criterion for certainty, the proposition that *"if it is impossible that x is false then x is certain"* (cf. 2:291; 23). The principle, he claims, may be viewed either "objectively" or "subjectively." Taken objectively, the degree of certainty guaranteed by this principle is dependent on the "sufficiency in the characteristics of the necessity of a truth" (2:291; 23). But taken subjectively, the degree of certainty is said to increase as "the knowledge of this necessity is more intuitive (2:291; 23). In this "subjective aspect" philosophical certainty is at a particular disadvantage to mathematical certainty. For subjectively, philosophical, and especially metaphysical, knowledge lacks the intuitive grounding that mathematical knowledge has. Indeed, as we have seen, the abstract nature of the philosopher's concepts entails that one or several characteristics of the concept may escape his notice. This, in turn, diminishes the degree of certainty guaranteed by the principle when viewed "objectively." Moreover, such a concept has corresponding to it "nothing sensible to reveal [such] omission to us" (2:292; 24).

As in the *Beweisgrund,* then, Kant ultimately attributes metaphysical error to a kind of conflation of "subjective" and "objective" conditions, a point that is crucial for understanding his later diagnoses of metaphysical error. In the *Deutlichkeit* Kant argues that we conflate our consciousness of a thing with the thing itself. Thus, he suggests that characteristics are erroneously denied of metaphysical objects in accordance with the judgment that *"that of which one is not conscious in a thing does not exist"* (*Deutlichkeit* 2:292; 23). This claim may be compared with the diagnosis of error earlier encountered in the *Beweisgrund.* Previously, recall, Kant was concerned to identify the errors involved in any failure to take into consideration the "matter" or "data" requisite for real possibility. In this sense, his criticisms were directed toward showing that mere conceivability by itself cannot stand as the sole criterion by means of which the possibility of objects is established. Indeed, Kant went so far as to argue that the very possibility of objects thought through empty concepts is illusory. In line with this, Kant seems concerned to show in the *Deutlichkeit* that our "perception" of objects is an inadequate basis for any complete discrimination of objects. As Kant puts the problem, characteristics are denied of a metaphysical object precisely because they have not been directly "perceived" in the thing (2:291; 23). Such a judgment is, for obvious reasons, problematic, and Kant directly traces the false definitions of metaphysics back to such a faulty judgment:

> Philosophy, and metaphysics in particular, is far more uncertain in its explanations, if it wishes to venture them. For the concept of what has to be explained is given. If one or other of its characteristics escapes notice, which notwithstanding belongs to its complete discrimination; and if it is supposed that no such necessary characteristic is lacking to the full concept, the definition is false and deceptive [*falsch und trüglich*]. We could produce innumerable examples of such a mistake. (2:291; 23–24)

Despite what de Vleeschauwer has called the "empiricism" of this period, Kant in the *Deutlichkeit* does not claim that the mathematical method is forever off limits to philosophers.[16] On the contrary, his claim appears to be that philosophical analysis is somehow propaedeutic to attaining an ideal, a priori metaphysical science. That is, once the

16 I thus agree with Laywine, who argues that the *Deutlichkeit* is far less "empiricistic" than de Vleeschauwer suggests. See Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,* p. 22.

concepts of philosophy are sufficiently clarified through analysis, and the requisite definitions acquired, the philosopher will be able to proceed from these definitions after the manner of mathematics. The deductive method, then, is still thought to have the capacity to yield metaphysical knowledge. The belief that knowledge of objects finds its culmination in a purely rational science that goes far beyond what can be given to us in sensible experience constitutes the core of the *Inaugural Dissertation*. Paradoxically, however, such a position is itself grounded in an intermediate work, the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer,* the purpose of which is precisely to question the possibility of such a metaphysics.

The Delusion of Metaphysical Knowledge and the *Dreams*

It is precisely the metaphysician's tendency to go beyond the domain of experience and to speculate about intelligible, or what Kant will later call "transcendent," objects, such as the soul, that is criticized in the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* of 1766.[17] The work, which has invited a great deal of speculation, is interesting for a number of reasons. First is Kant's explicit recognition that the improper attempt to apply the mathematical method of mathematics to a science of the real is bound up with a failure to recognize the nature and limitations of our faculties of knowledge, especially human reason. Second is Kant's suggestion that concepts and principles need to be traced back to and examined in terms of the faculties to which they belong. We have already seen in the *Deutlichkeit* how Kant traced faulty metaphysical inferences back to the abstract nature of the concepts considered in that discipline, and the consequent danger of producing deceptive definitions. In the *Dreams,* he further suggests that, in the absence of delineating the limitations of our faculties of knowledge, we, on the basis of some kind of delusion, mistakenly suppose our conceptions have a legitimacy they do not in fact have.

Kant works out his position by presenting an antinomial conflict that centers on the philosophical conception of spiritual being. In line with this, he launches into what for many has become a bewildering discussion of issues traditionally subsumed under rational psychology, to wit:

17 *Traüme eines Geistersehers, erlautert durch Traüme der Metaphysik* (2:315–384). Citations in English are from Walford's translation in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770,* pp. 301–360.

the possibility of spiritual being, the problem of mind-body interaction, and the notion of a community of spirits. Kant's intentions are not always clear, and the work has been subject to a number of interpretations.[18] The controversy stems in part from Kant's odd presentation. Kant begins the *Dreams* with a preamble that intimates that the upcoming work (a review, of sorts, of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*) is superfluous and insincere.[19] The first chapter of part 1 (*"A Tangled Metaphysical Knot, Which can be either Untied or Cut as one Pleases"*) presents some preliminary ruminations on the philosophical conception of spiritual being. Accordingly, Kant begins with the general conception of spirits as immaterial beings who possess reason (*Dreams* 2:319–320; 307).[20] However, this conception leads us unwittingly into a set of puzzles (a "knot"). Strictly speaking, spiritual being must be construed to lack the property of impenetrability, but insofar as it is considered to be a part of (a constituent of) the universe, and particularly insofar as it is considered to bear any relation to a world of body, it must be thought of as occupying space. The question, then, is how and in what sense any such spiritual being could be granted a place in the whole of this universe.[21]

One answer might be that it occupies space not by virtue of being impenetrable but rather by virtue of exerting a sphere of activity – that is, by virtue of possessing some kind of force. Such a force could be construed in one of two ways, as either the kind of force exerted by material elements (e.g., a repulsive force, as the *Physical Monadology*),[22] or as "some other kind of spiritual force." In the first case, there is nothing to distinguish the alleged spiritual being from the primary elements of matter. In the latter, one is left to wonder how the notion of a *force* is applicable to spirits at all. If spiritual being exists, and if it exists as part of the universe, its presence must be admitted to be quite mysterious indeed.

These considerations are to "prepare" the "untutored understand-

18 For a good summary, see again Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,* pp. 15–24.

19 See 2:317–318; 305. The English is from Walford's translation in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770.*

20 Because the conception of a spiritual nature cannot be drawn from experience (i.e., it is not something taken out of our empirical conceptions), Kant's procedure for clarifying this conception cannot consist in any appeal to the data given to us through the senses.

21 Much of this discussion, as in many places in the *Dreams,* is quite reminiscent of Aristotle. See *De Anima,* esp. 402a . The English is from Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941).

22 See the *Physical Monadology,* Ak 1:481–483.

ing" for the upcoming journey into speculative metaphysics that occupies chapter 2 (*"A Fragment of Occult Philosophy, the Purpose of Which Is to Reveal Our Community with the Spirit World"*). Here, after delineating the general, "philosophically plausible" account of spiritual nature, Kant constructs a "two-worlds" view according to which he asserts that a "spirit world" exists in addition to, and "along-side" of, the material world.[23] Because the material world (the world of sensuous experience) admits of physicomathematical (i.e., mechanical) explanations only on the basis of the material manifestations of solidity, expansion, and form, the spirit world (which has none of these) is not subject to mechanical explanation. Instead, the "immaterial beings" are said to be governed by a unique set of "pneumatic laws" (*Dreams* 2:329–330; 316–317). The result of all this is a rather extravagant "system," one characteristic of philosophical idealists,[24] which includes accounts of the relations between immaterial beings, and one that views the spirit world (the immaterial beings) as the underlying principle of the life that is manifested in the material world. This intelligible system offers us a kind of inverted world of the material universe, a mirror image which is, according to Kant, constructed by well-applied reason.

Arguing in a way that is clearly by analogy with the system of interaction in the material world, Kant even notes the way in which one could claim to adduce evidence for this system. Just as material objects are conceived to be in thoroughgoing community (to coexist) with one another by virtue of being subject to the universal laws of attraction, so too, it seems, spiritual beings must be conceived as standing in a relation of reciprocal interaction with one another by virtue of being subject to a universal "spiritual" law. It might even seem reasonable to suggest that we are, each of us, aware of the force of such a law exerted on us, for we all acknowledge the influence of universal interests (2:335; 322). Moreover, insofar as the human soul must be considered to bear some relation to both the material and the spiritual world, our hypothetical system might even serve the purpose of accounting for the delusions that are otherwise perplexing, to wit, the profusion of inexplicable stories and the wide acceptance of such stories about spiritual influences.[25]

23 Kant refers to the "spirit world" in chapter 2 as "a whole existing in its own right" (*Dreams* 2:330; 317).

24 Kant presumably has Leibniz and Wolff in mind.

25 Many have suggested that Kant is not to be taken seriously in chapter 2 – that he is merely adopting a buffoonish persona in order to mock it later on. For a defense of this

In opposition to this two-worlds view, Kant presents, in chapter 3 of the *Dreams,* a "commonsense" view according to which there is one common world (the material world) shared by all who are "awake." Any view that excludes conformity with others' common sense is the "dream world" of a sleeper. Here, Kant appears to be contrasting the real, material world from the imaginary "ego worlds" of the dreamers, visionaries and, presumably, the idealists.[26] In the latter cases, one is deluded into taking purely subjective phenomena to be representative of objective phenomena, and transposing figments of the imagination into real objects. In the *Dreams,* Kant suggests that these imaginary, solipsistic worlds of the sleeping may be constructed in one of two ways: through flights of reason (by the reason dreamers) or through deceptions of the senses (by the sensation dreamers) (cf. 2:342; 329). In either case, these imaginary worlds are independent of, and receive no uniform confirmation from, the shared world of experience.

Characteristic of the reason dreamer (presumably here the metaphysician) is the tendency to become so absorbed in the fancies created by his own imagination that he loses sight of the real information given him through his senses. Even so, the objects of his fancy are not inserted into the real world of experience as *perceptual* objects. His problem is generated by *faulty judgments,* a "deception" of reason (*Betrüg der Vernunft*), according to which the metaphysician is compelled to make claims about objects for which there are no corresponding data of sensation. Such flights of fancy might be easily dismissed from the point of view of common sense, for the sensible data, when considered, contrast with or, at the very least, fail to confirm his imaginary system and shows it to be a merely "fictitious idea" created by his own mind.

On the other hand, the sensation dreamer (the spirit seer) does locate his fictitious ideas in the world of experience. Kant's account of the delusions characteristic of the sensation dreamer is worth considering in some detail. The first thing to note is the similarity between the deceptions of the spirit seer and those encountered in a dream. In both cases, Kant notes, we are deluded by imaginative sensory experiences into believing that certain objects really exist outside of us and interact with us. This similarity between dreaming states and the states of the

view, see Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,* pp. 85–100. I do not think this is quite so.

26 Cf. Kant's claim in the *Inaugural Dissertation,* that the "ego world" is not a real world, but is rather "imaginary" (2:390).

spirit seer provides the basis for a "mechanical" explanation of the delusions of the visionary. As Kant himself tells us, the errors involve locating a fictitious image, a chimera, or an "illusion of one's imagination" outside oneself and in relation to one's body in such a way that a figment of the imagination is "transposed as an object" (2:344; 331):

> Hence, the question which I wish to have answered is this: How does the soul transpose such an image, which it ought , after all, to present as contained within oneself, into a quite different relation, locating it, namely, in a place external to itself among the objects which present themselves to the sensation which the soul has. (2:344; 331)

Kant is keen to press the question, How is such deception possible? (2:344; 331). Following a tradition that goes at least as far back as Aristotle, Kant provides an account of the causes in the brain that lead to the delusions of the imagination in such cases.[27] Aristotle claims that dreams issue from the faculty of sense perception, although only in its character as "presentative." Moreover, according to him, "the faculty by which, in waking hours, we are subject to illusion when affected by disease, is identical with that which produces illusory effects in sleep."[28] In order to explain the "perception" of objects in dreams, where there is really no object present, Aristotle notes that "What happens in these cases may be compared with what happens in the case of projectiles moving in space. For in the case of these the movement continues even when that which set up the movement is no longer in contact" (*De Somniis* 459a, 30; 620).[29]

In addition, Aristotle suggests that oftentimes the dream image is permeated with interpretive claims that issue from the thinking faculty.[30] It is worth noting that, in a similar fashion, Epicurus is said to have argued that although the visions of dreams are true in the sense that they are capable of motivating us, he also contends that such "contacts of the mind" can produce "deceptive images" (*phantasmata*).[31] His point seems to be that the internal conditions of the subject set up a motion of atoms that imitates perception, and which then "swerves"

27 Aristotle, *De Somniis,* in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 459a; 619.

28 See Aristotle, *De Somniis* 459a; 619. 29 *De Somniis* 459a30; 620.

30 See 458b, 25–30; 618–619.

31 See J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 33.

from its course as a result of opinion and belief. What is relevant here is the fact that Kant wants to suggest, in chapter 3 of the *Dreams,* that the spirit seer's experience might be accounted for by appealing to this same kind of physiological disorder. Thus, in response to the questions that concern how the spirit seer manages to transpose an image into a perceived "external" object, Kant suggests that "certain organs of the brain are so distorted that the motion of the nerves, which harmoniously vibrate with certain images of the imagination, moves along lines indicating the direction which, if extended, would intersect outside the brain – if all this is supposed, then the *focus imaginarious* is located outside the thinking subject" (2:346–347; 333).

In this passage, Kant is clearly attempting to provide a "physiological" account of the error. Kant connects this physiological account to the deception according to which the object is erroneously located outside the perceiving subject. To be sure, the tone of Kant's work makes it difficult to know whether the diagnosis of error is offered sincerely. It is clear, however, that Kant wants to suggest that there is an analogy between what takes place in cases of empirical or optical illusion and cases of metaphysical illusion, at least as regards the metaphysical accounts of spiritual being. Indeed, he wants to suggest that the metaphysician's belief in spiritual being might be accounted for along the very same lines as one might account for the deceptions that occur in dream states. The notion of the *focus imaginarious* plays a crucial role here, and it is an idea that will become central to Kant's account of the illusory metaphysical ideas of reason in the *Critique.*

Kant's explanation, and particularly his appeal to the *focus imaginarious,* in turn bears a striking resemblance to the account of the optical illusion related to mirror vision in Newton's *Opticks.*[32] On Newton's view, what characterizes optical illusion in these cases is the fact that a "background" image is "projected" as lying before the subject in a place where it would be if the object were actually in front. The model for this illusion in the *Opticks* is shown in Figure 1. An object that is actually outside of our field of direct vision appears "in front of us," in a place where it would be if the "lines" of light actually proceeded along a straight course. This case, it appears, provides a very powerful metaphor for Kant in his own attempts to characterize our epistemological position with respect to the transcendent objects of traditional metaphysics. In the *Dreams* Kant suggests that the mind or brain "mirrors" certain (sub-

32 Newton, *Opticks,* book I, axiom 8.

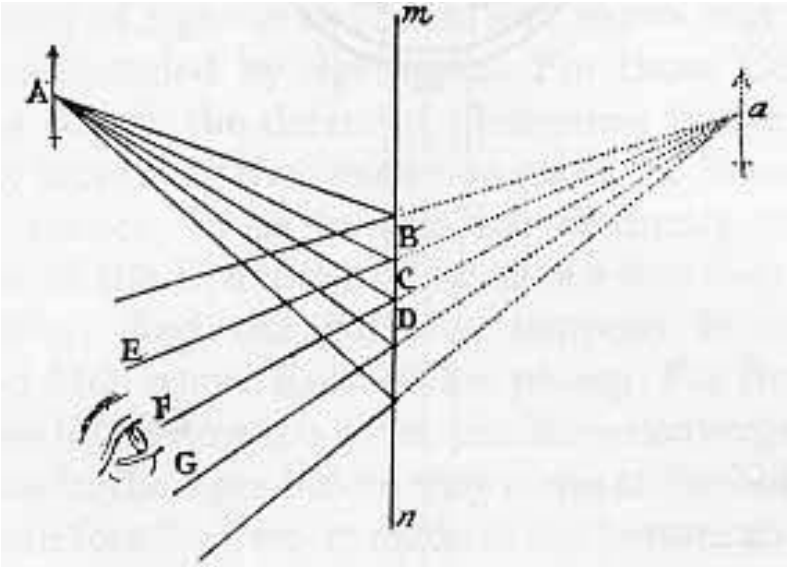

Figure 1. The optical illusion related to mirror vision, from Newton's *Opticks*.

jective) features of its own constitution, thus presenting them as objects external to the subject itself. What is of particular interest for our purposes is the fact that Kant uses this account of sensory delusion as a kind of analogy in order to illuminate the errors involved in the "delusions of reason." Thus, he suggests that this explanation of the sensory delusion might somehow shed light on the case of the philosophical conception of spiritual being offered by the metaphysician in chapter 2 of the *Dreams*.

> Even the popular concept of spirit-beings, which we extracted above from ordinary linguistic usage, is very much in accordance with this type of delusion. Nor is this concept untrue to its origin, for the essential characteristic mark of this concept is supposed to be constituted by the property of being present in space but not imperceptible. (2:347; 333)

What are we to make of Kant's claim here? Note that he repeatedly suggests that there is some affinity between the delusions of the metaphysician and those of the visionary. Clearly, the connection in this regard has to do with the fact that the metaphysician is also somehow placing the ideas outside the self and, in so doing, taking subjective phenomena to be objective and real. But if he is not doing so in any sensory fashion, that is, if he is not deceived by the semblance of an actual

"perception" of these fictitious images (the metaphysician, unlike the spirit seer, does not actually think she "sees" the soul in space) – how are we to understand this claim? The answer to this question refers back to the opening passages of the *Dreams*. The problem, as we have seen, is that the metaphysician takes the soul to have some kind of "place" in the world by virtue of which it "acts" or exerts forces or influences on the body. To view the soul in this way is to assign it a "place" or "locality" in space and time surreptitiously, even as we gainsay its physical status. In accordance with this, Laywine has argued that the *Dreams* represents Kant's attempt to provide a corrective to his own early metaphysical views. Having earlier attempted for a theory of real interaction that would apply equally to both material elements and spiritual beings, Kant was ultimately forced to recognize the errors of his early views. Indeed, she argues that what motivates the *Dreams* is Kant's growing recognition that his system committed the same violations as the fantastical Swedenborg.[33]

There is little doubt that Kant's fear is that the doctrine of the spirit smuggles in the notion of a supposed being that has a place in the universe without however having any of the properties that would seem requisite for the assigning of such a place. If this is Kant's view, it is little wonder that the reason dreamer and the spirit seer might have more in common than either would care to admit. But the question remaining is *how* such a deception comes about. It seems clear that Kant is moving toward the view that intelligible objects are being "reflected out of the mind" and confused with objects of sense. Moreover, Kant's view seems to be that the error comes about in a twofold manner and includes both "faulty" conceptions or surreptitious definitions (on the one hand), and erroneous judgments drawn on the basis of these (on the other). In the *Dreams,* Kant traces our faulty conceptions (of, e.g., spiritual being) back to empirical concepts.

It is worth noting, then, that Kant is offering what would seem to be an empirical account of the delusion or, to borrow his own characterization of Locke, "a physiology" of error. Indeed, Kant suggests that the rational inquiries (delusions of reason or faulty judgments) are themselves ultimately grounded in conceptions derived from experience. To say that the delusion of reason (*Betrüg der Vernunft*) is ultimately founded in empirical conceptions is, it would appear, simply to claim that the rational conceptions are assumed to be "positive" or "materi-

33 See Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origin of the Critical Philosophy.*

ally informative" (when they are not) because they are based originally on empirical conceptions, which are then subject to improper use or judgments. Thus surreptitious conceptions seem, through use and context, to acquire a commonly understood "determinate" meaning, when in fact they are empty. Once again, Kant calls such conceptions "surreptitious." He maintains that they do not arise from experience, but in "covert and obscure inferences made in the course of experience . . . [which] propagate themselves by attaching to other concepts, without there being any awareness of the experience itself on which they were originally based, or of the inference which formed the concept on the basis of that experience" (2:320; 308). Moreover, as with the sensory or perceptual delusions of the spirit seer, one might argue that many of these surreptitious conceptions are partly only "delusions of imagination" (*Wahn der Einbildung;* 2:320n; 308).

Although the deceptions of the reason dreamer and the spirit seer might bear a certain affinity, Kant is actually careful not to identify them. Most important is the fact that in the case of the spirit seer, the delusion is *necessarily deceptive*. The direct testimony of sense impressions, which carry with them a kind of "immediate evidence," renders the delusion not only immediate and unavoidable but also makes the accounts of these visionaries more compelling:

> Since the malady of the fantastical visionary does not really affect the understanding [*Verstand*] but rather involves the deception of the senses [*Täuschung der Sinne*], the wretched victim cannot banish his illusions [*Blendwerke*] by means of subtle reasoning. He cannot do so because, true or illusory, the impression of the senses itself precedes all judgment of the understanding and possesses an immediate certainty. (2:348; 335)

The reason dreamer, on the other hand, has the opportunity, it seems, to avoid the dizzying flights of his delusive fancy. He can prevent the inferences drawn on the basis of faulty or surreptitious conceptions of spiritual beings. In fact, avoiding such error is precisely the moral of the *Dreams*. "The comparison of the two observations yields, it is true, pronounced parallaxes, but it is also the only method for preventing the optical deception [*optischen Betrüg*], and the only means of placing the concepts in the true positions which they occupy relatively to the cognitive faculty" (*Dreams* 2:349; 336).

With respect to the conception of spiritual being under consideration, its inadequacy is identified once we view it in relation to our faculties of knowledge. Kant's general claim is that the rational conception

of spiritual being available to us is inadequate for the purposes for which we intend to use it. In fact, this is exactly the "theoretical" conclusion drawn from part 1 of the *Dreams*. To the extent that such a conception has no corresponding data in sensation, we cannot provide any positive determination of it:

> The principle of this life, in other words, the spirit-nature which we do not know but only suppose, can never be positively thought, for in the entire range of our sensations, there are no *data* for such positive thought. One has to make due with negations if one is to think something which differs so much from anything of a sensible character. But even the possibility of such negations is based neither on experience, nor on inferences, but on a fiction, in which reason, stripped of all assistance . . . , seeks its refuge. (2:352; 339)

It seems reasonable to suggest that when Kant questions the real possibility of such beings, he has in mind something like the claim earlier explicated in the *Beweisgrund*. There, recall, Kant argued that when our concepts are empty (lack data for thought), the possibility of the objects thought through such concepts is "illusory." Only if, that is, one already (and for Kant erroneously) identifies the criteria for real possibility with those for thinkability does one think it legitimate to conclude from the mere concept of a thing to its real possibility. In a similar fashion, Kant here suggests that the possibility of a being that can only be thought "negatively" as something that is "not x, not y," etc., is delusive. These negative conceptions offer no support for the existence of an intelligible being. But Kant's further claim is that they do not support the denial of such a being either.

The view that the metaphysical conception of the soul eludes any positive determination (and remains therefore empty) is adumbrated in the opening sections of the *Dreams,* where Kant warns us not to confuse the criteria for conceivability with those for possibility (cf. 2:322–323; 310). That of which we can form no conception we tend to reject as impossible. A spiritual being, according to Kant, is precisely the kind of thing of which we can form no adequate conception. Consider the following:

> It is, of course, impossible to form any concept of that which deviates from common empirical concepts and which no experience can explain, even analogically. And for that reason one tends to dismiss it as impossible. (2:322; 310)

> Now suppose that I posited the existence of substances which were of a different kind [i.e., immaterial substances]. If I supposed that such substances existed, it would be altogether impossible for me to think of them *in concreto* as displaying activity, unless it bore analogy with my empirical representations. And, insofar as I have denied them the property of *filling* the space in which they operate, I would have deprived myself of a concept by means of which the things which present themselves to my senses are otherwise thinkable for me; and the inevitable result must, therefore, be a kind of unthinkability. (2:323; 310–311)

The distinction between conceivability and possibility, then, undermines our efforts to demonstrate the possibility of spiritual beings by reason alone. But Kant argues that it is equally clear that such a being cannot be proved by reason to be impossible, either (2:323–324; 311). Consequently, the metaphysician is left with a negative, indeterminate conception of a supposed being that corresponds to nothing whatsoever that is actually given to us in our experience, and whose very possibility cannot be demonstrated. As such, the philosopher is, as we find out in Part II, no better off than Swedenborg, whose private testimonies, despite the elaborate systematization of his visions, amount to nothing more than delusions. This fact obviously places into question the status of metaphysical doctrines such as those about spirits, and leads Kant to conclude that only a sophistical zeal could justify the attempt to answer the questions set by reason about things that must transcend our sensuous experience. Implicit in such a view are two claims: reason is not limited in its operation to the conditions under which we have sensuous experience, and sensible experience alone provides the data requisite for knowledge of reality.

Both claims together entail that reason is in a position to demand answers to questions that are beyond our ability to answer. It is clear that Kant understands this fact to be responsible for many of the erroneous metaphysical claims, doctrines, and inquiries. In light of this, Kant reinterprets the role and purpose of metaphysics. Metaphysics, he claims, is the "science of the limits of human reason" (2:368; 354). Its task is to take the questions delivered by reason as to the hidden nature of things and determine: whether such an inquiry itself falls within the limits of possible human knowledge, and what relation the inquiry or question itself has to the empirical conceptions that are its foundation (cf. *Dreams* 2:368; 354).

Metaphysics, as a rational inquiry into the nature of things, thus gives way to a philosophy that tests its own procedures and understands ob-

jects in terms of their relation to the human mind. This latter discipline then reveals the "boundaries" beyond which speculation cannot go. Specifically, it cannot legitimately pass beyond the domain of experience and, when it does, its claims, rather than expressing real knowledge, amount to nothing more than empty speculation, or fiction. Insofar as the metaphysician is to say anything substantive about such a purely negative conceptual entity, he succumbs imperceptibly to the use of analogies with the physical, analogies that are not only not suited to the purpose, but which actually generate the conundrums with which Kant began his discussion.

> I am connected with beings of my own kind through the mediation of corporeal laws, but I can in no wise establish from what is given to me whether, in addition, I am not also connected, or could not ever be connected, with such beings, in accordance with other laws, which I shall call pneumatic laws, and be so independently of the mediation of matter. All judgments . . . concerning the way in which my soul moves my body, or the way in which it is now or may in the future be related to other beings like myself, can never be anything more than fictions – fictions which are, indeed, far from having even the value of those . . . in natural science . . . called hypotheses. (2:371; 357)

> Since the considerations adduced by reason do not, in such a case, have the least force either to invent or to confirm such possibility or impossibility, . . . all one can do is to concede to experience the right to decide the issue. (2:371–372; 357–358)

Despite the obviously "empiricistic" tone of the *Dreams,* Kant does not berate us for our metaphysical propensities. In fact, he notes repeatedly, and ironically, that a strictly empiricist view, while perhaps able to explain in accordance with mechanical laws various experienced (i.e., sensuous) phenomena, can nevertheless not go beyond such phenomena in order to offer any *reason why* they operate in the ways they do. To take Kant's own example, we can know from experience that matter operates in accordance with the force of repulsion, but not the reason why this is so. This problem plays a crucial role in justifying the use of the idea of reason as *focus imaginarious* in the *Critique.* Kant's claim, then, is not that experience is capable of yielding all sufficient information; in fact, he recognizes that experience itself provides us with grounds for speculating about "hidden reasons" and underlying principles. Thus, for example, he claims that the fact that we

recognize in ourselves abilities to choose or think, abilities that are different in kind from any bodily, sensuous features, justifies us (gives us good reason) in conceiving of ourselves as incorporeal and constant beings. Unfortunately, we can conclude nothing as to the nature, existence, or properties of such beings on the basis of what is given us in experience. The problem is that the metaphysician, recognizing the impossibility of drawing such conclusions solely on the basis of what is given to us in experience, nevertheless assumes that such reasons are necessarily to be found and that he can attain these reasons and principles through analysis. But analysis (i.e., pure reason) can, as we have seen, never by itself result in conclusions about reality. Kant's position is revealed in his remarks concerning claims about the human soul: "I know, of course, that thinking and willing move my body, but I can never reduce this phenomenon, as a simple experience, to another phenomenon by means of analysis; hence, I can recognize this phenomenon but I cannot understand it" (2:370; 356).

The need to determine the limits of human reason issues from the fact that we are constrained somehow, or invited, by reason to conceive of, or recognize, things that nevertheless transcend our ability to know or determine. In order to curb our rational pretensions we set limits to our inquiries in accordance with the limited range of our cognitive powers. In order to expose problematic, yet compelling, conceptions as "surreptitious," we trace these conceptions back to their origin in the mind. The result is a purely negative metaphysics, one that yields no new knowledge about, for example, spiritual being, but which rests content with exposing the limitations imposed by experience. The negative doctrine of spiritual being succeeds in "completing" the theory of spirits, not by extending our material knowledge, but rather by demonstrating that we have reached the limits of such knowledge. Examination of the *Dreams,* then, reveals an explicit connection between Kant's conviction that the deductive method is inappropriate for metaphysics and his developing concern to establish limitations to the legitimate employment of reason. At the heart of Kant's development is the growing concern to view metaphysics as a symptom of some kind of delusion generated by the very nature of our cognitive faculties. This is confirmed not only by the systematic treatment of such a notion in the *Dreams* itself but also by various comments of Kant to Lambert.

Nevertheless, the *Dreams* seems to generate as many problems as it solves. Kant's suggestion that the delusions of reason, unlike the delu-

sions of the visionary, might be *avoidable* challenges him to outline a more detailed method for their avoidance. Short of providing such a method, the *Dreams* leaves us with a merely negative claim about the limits of our knowledge, while at the same time intimating that we are justified in going beyond these limits (beyond experience) in order to secure ultimate explanations. The work also leaves the function of the intellect in its efforts to think beyond experience mysterious and opaque. Given this, it is no surprise that Kant's next major work (the *Dissertation*) is designed precisely to secure the method for avoiding metaphysical errors and, in this connection, to develop a theory of the intellect.

The Transition from the *Dreams* to the *Dissertation*

Between 1765 and 1767 Kant and Lambert exchanged a series of letters that addressed the problem of securing metaphysical knowledge. In the letters, they take up the oft-repeated concerns about method. Lambert, for his part, argues that the success of metaphysics requires recognition of the distinction between form and matter: "we do not get to any material knowledge from the form alone; we shall remain in the realm of the ideal, stuck in mere nomenclature, if we do not look out for what is primary and thinkable in itself, the matter or objective stuff of knowledge" (Nov. 13, 1765; 10:51–52; 45).[34] Lambert's general contention is that the matter of knowledge cannot itself be known simply through knowledge of the form. Because disputes in metaphysics are over material claims, the problem is to elucidate the basis for material knowledge, a problem he considers Wolff to have overlooked.[35] Thus, in another letter (Feb. 3, 1766) he argues that Leibnizian analysis, qua method, results for the most part in "nominal relational concepts that concern the form more than the matter" (10:62–67; 51). Such relational concepts, he claims, can provide an account of nothing besides the concepts themselves.[36]

As we have already seen, Kant was in general agreement with Lambert on these issues. In a reply to Lambert written just before the pub-

34 Citations in English are from A. Zweig's *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

35 See Lambert's letter to Kant, Feb. 3, 1766 (10:62–67; 50–51).

36 Accordingly, he suggests that the really objectively simple concepts must be found by direct intuition (*Anschauen*). See 10:62–67; 52.

lication of the *Dreams* (Dec. 31, 1765), Kant claims to have finally secured the method proper to metaphysics. The requirement for the new method is explicitly linked to the problem of metaphysical "delusion" (*Wahn*): "I have finally reached the point where I feel secure of the method that has to be followed if one wants to escape that delusion of knowledge that has us constantly expecting to reach a conclusion, yet just as constantly makes us retrace our steps, a delusion from which the devastating disunity among philosophers also arises" (10:54–57; 48).

In the *Dreams,* recall, the method in question was said to involve examining metaphysical inquiries in light of our (materially limited) faculty of knowledge. Here, as in the *Dreams,* Kant warns that we must seek to find in relation to our investigations what kind of knowledge would be required of us and, more important, what degree of knowledge is possible for us with regard to the questions at hand. The results of these latter inquiries are judgments perhaps more limited, but also more "definite and secure than is customary in philosophy" (10:54–57; 48). According to Kant, the failure to take into consideration the relation between our inquiries or conceptions and our faculties of knowledge results in dubious metaphysics, and he claims to have copious examples of "erroneous judgments" to illustrate this point (10:54–57; 48–49).

Kant again appeals to the notion of delusion in his April 8, 1766, letter to Mendelssohn. The letter is a response to Mendelssohn's expressed displeasure over the content and tone of Kant's *Dreams.* In it Kant defends himself against the charge that the position he adopts in that work trivializes metaphysics. Kant's response is that it is not metaphysics itself that he disparages, but rather those "pseudo-insights" generated by the attempt to deploy the wrong method in metaphysics (10:69–73; 55–56). The claims here are mostly repetitious of those found in the *Dreams:* Kant speaks of the need to question whether, by means of a priori rational judgments, we could decide on the issues about spirits or discover the cause-effect relationship. Kant's response, again as in the *Dreams,* is that it is a "mere delusion" to argue from the conceivability of such things to their truth. Avoiding such delusion is accomplished by means of a methodological procedure according to which the limitations imposed by the "bounds of experience which contains the data for our reason" are established. Such a procedure is said to provide a necessary propaedeutic for metaphysics.

This propaedeutic discipline is further developed in the *Inaugural Dissertation,*[37] and it is in this last work that the important notion that errors in traditional metaphysics are generated by a kind of cognitive delusion (*Wahn/Betrüg*) is developed into the doctrine of illusion (*Schein/Illusion*) which ultimately finds its way into the *Critique.* It is to this work that we now turn.

37 *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis* (1770; 2:385–420). Citations in English are from Kerferd and Walford, *Kant: Selected Pre-Critical Writings,* pp. 46–92.

2

THE *INAUGURAL DISSERTATION*

In the *Dreams,* Kant appealed to the notion of delusion in order to limit material knowledge claims to objects (data) given to our senses. In line with this, the possibility of acquiring any *metaphysical* knowledge of reality was bracketed off, at least until such time as the relation between the conceptions at issue and the cognitive capacities could be established. This last project is again taken up in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770. In the *Dissertation,* however, the possibility of acquiring metaphysical knowledge of reality is explicitly left open, and the theory of illusion is developed as part of a methodological procedure designed to avoid the errors presumably generated by incorrectly applying sensitive conditions to objects of pure reason. This method is thus supposed to provide a means of avoiding metaphysical *errors* without denying the possibility of a nonfallacious *metaphysics.* In yet another letter to Lambert (Sept. 2, 1770), Kant describes the problem as follows:

> The most universal laws of sensibility play an unjustifiably large role in metaphysics, where, after all, it is merely concepts and principles [*Grundsätze*] of pure reason that are at issue. A quite special, though purely negative science, general phenomenology [*phaenomologia generalis*], seems to me to be presupposed by metaphysics. In it the principles of sensibility, their validity and their limitations, would be determined, so that these principles could not be confusedly applied to objects of pure reason, as has heretofore almost always happened. For space and time, and the axioms for considering all things under these conditions, are with respect to empirical knowledge and all objects of sense, very real; they are actually the conditions of all appearances and all empirical judgments. But extremely mistaken conclusions emerge if we apply the basic concepts of sensibility to something that is not at all an object of sense, that is, some-

> thing thought through a universal or pure concept of the understanding as a thing or substance in general. (10:96–99; 59–60)[1]

The passage suggests that Kant thought that he had finally succeeded in locating the ultimate source of the error in metaphysics. The problem highlighted in the *Dreams* (that of subjecting the metaphysical concept of spiritual being to sensible conditions, and thus assigning it a spatial location) is now generalized, and Kant's present view is that any attempt to subject intellectually thought concepts to the conditions of sense is illicit. The negative project of limiting knowledge to the data of sense alluded to in the *Dreams* has now taken the form of a well-defined "science": *general phenomenology*. This quotation also points to an important distinction between the *Dreams* and the *Dissertation*. One general result of the *Dreams* was that any attempt to use pure reason as a mode of a priori knowledge was rendered superfluous and unproductive. In the absense of any sensible data, the conceptions deployed by the metaphysicians lack any confirmation whatsoever. As we saw, this leaves the function of the intellect opaque, and suggests that its proclivity for speculation beyond the data given to sense might be entirely without merit. In this, it is clear that in the *Dreams* Kant was primarily concerned, as it were, to "curb the pretensions" of the intellect. Once again, however, in the *Dissertation,* Kant is primarily interested in restricting the use of "sensitive" principles. Metaphysical error, he will argue, involves the subsumption of intellectually thought subjects (e.g., "substance in general") under the conditions of sensuality.

The Distinction between Sensuality and the Intellect

The diagnosis of metaphysical error in the *Dissertation* ultimately draws on Kant's kind-distinction between the sensitive and intellectual faculties, a distinction that is systematically developed for the first time in the *Dissertation*. In line with this distinction, he defines "sensuality" (*sensualitas*) as the "*receptivity* of a subject in virtue of which it is possible for the subject's own representative state to be affected in a definite way by the presence of some object" (2:392; 384).[2] In contrast to this, Kant de-

1 The translation is from A. Zweig, *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–99* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

2 Citations in English are from David Walford's translation in *The Cambridge Companion to the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

fines "intelligence" (rationality) as "the *faculty* of a subject in virtue of which it has the power to represent things which cannot by their own quality come before the senses of that subject" (2:392; 384). Corresponding to the distinction between the two faculties (sensuality and intelligence) are two other (closely related) distinctions: between sensitive and intellectual *objects,* and between sensitive and intellectual *cognition.*

The former yields the distinction between phenomena and noumena. As Kant points out, the distinction concerns the objects represented through the respective faculties: "The object of sensuality is the sensible; that which contains nothing but what is to be cognized through the intelligence is the intelligible. In the schools of the ancients the first was called a *phenomenon* and the second a *noumenon"* (2:392; 384).

The importance attached to distinguishing between "objects" of the pure understanding and objects of sensitive intuition was, of course, made abundantly clear in the *Dreams,* where problems were generated precisely by the unacknowledged delusion of taking spiritual being to be locally "placed." The earlier project of tracing conceptions back to their source in the human mind clearly leads Kant, in the *Dissertation,* to draw a corresponding distinction between different sorts of cognition. Thus, after formulating the distinction between phenomena and noumena, Kant offers the second distinction – that between sensitive and intellectual *cognition:* "Cognition insofar as it is subject to the laws of sensuality is *sensitive,* insofar as it is subject to the laws of the intelligence, it is *intellectual* or rational" (2:392; 384). Moreover, on this basis he argues that:

> Whatever in cognition is sensitive is dependent upon the special character of the subject to the extent that the subject is capable of this or that modification by the presence of objects. . . . But whatever in cognition is exempt from such subjective conditions relates only to the object. It is thus clear that things which are thought sensitively are representations of *things as they appear,* while things which are intellectual are representations of things *as they are.* (2:393; 384)

The claim that sensitive cognition is dependent on the special character of the subject is decidedly Lockean in nature and reflects the standard "modern" view that many of the qualities of objects that appear to our senses are not true of the objects themselves. This view, of course, led to the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and to the claim that the latter are to be assigned to the mind, as "modifications" of the epistemological subject. In Kant's case, this stan-

dard view appears to be more dramatic. Because space and time are themselves subjective, Kant clearly deviates from the standard position, which allowed for many of the features of objects qua perceived (e.g., shape) to be "objective" or true of the objects themselves. This aspect of Kant's position would seem to follow from his "kind-distinction" between the faculties. In accordance with this distinction, sensuality and intellection provide two entirely unique and distinct capacities for representing objects, the former representing them as they "appear" and the latter as they really "are."

The view that sensitive cognition provides representations of things "as they appear," whereas intellectual cognition provides representations of things "as they are," is central to the *Dissertation*. At the heart of this position is Kant's further distinction between conceiving "by means of an abstract concept of the intellect" and following up such a concept "by the sensitive faculty of cognition" (i.e., representing it "in the concrete by a distinct intuition") (2:387; 377). Given Kant's distinction between sensitive and intellectual cognition, the latter is accomplished in accordance with the conditions of intuitive cognition, space, and time. The problem, once again, is that for Kant space and time are themselves *subjective* conditions, providing principles only for our (materially limited) sensitive cognition. Because of this, Kant claims, the "abstract ideas which the mind entertains when they have been received from the understanding very often cannot be followed up in the concrete and converted into intuitions" (2:389; 379). This "lack of accord" between the two faculties is ultimately held responsible for metaphysical error.

Central to Kant's position in the *Dissertation* is the view that any cognition that is exempt from the subjective conditions under which phenomena are represented is *objective* or true of "objects themselves." It follows from this that the intellect provides representations of things as they are. This, in turn, leads to the distinction between sensitive and intellectual *principles*. The former, he claims, "only enunciate laws of sensitive cognition," whereas the latter "teach something about the objects themselves" (2:412n; 81). Implicit in all of this would appear to be a belief that the laws of intellectual cognition express at the same time the criteria for real possibility. Although Kant denied this view in the *Dreams,* and will abandon it in the *Critique,* in the *Dissertation* he repeatedly identifies the criteria for conceivability with those for real possibility. This identification, as we shall see, provides the basis for Kant's theory of judgmental error. Before turning to that theory, however, some further discussion on the function of the intellect is in order.

Given Kant's radical distinction between sensuality and the intellect, it is not clear whether he wishes to say that the intellect provides access to its own (unique) set of objects, or whether it simply offers us a more "objective" representation of the objects of sense.

The Theory of the Intellect

Whether the distinction between phenomena and noumena is an "epistemological" distinction between two different kinds of representations of the *same set of objects,* or whether it is an "ontological" distinction between two *different kinds* of objects altogether, with the representations of one kind (phenomena) being unique to sensuality and the representations of the other (noumena) belonging to intelligence, is not immediately clear. Representative of the latter view is the work of Guyer, who rejects the epistemological reading of the *Dissertation,* despite the fact that it is suggested by a number of passages.[3] Foremost among these is the previously cited passage where Kant argues that "things which are thought sensitively are representations of things as they appear, but things which are intellectual are representations of things as they are" (2:393; 55). Here Kant would appear to be making a distinction between different kinds of representations, with the implication being that the same objects that only "appear" to the senses are represented as they really are through the intellect.

Similar suggestions are scattered throughout the *Dissertation.* Kant distinguishes between sensitive and intellectual principles by claiming that the former "enunciate laws of sensitive cognition," whereas the latter "*in addition* teach something about the objects themselves" (2:412n; 81, my emphasis). Here again it is reasonable to conclude from this that Kant takes the same set of (independently existing) objects to be differently represented by each of the two faculties. This view is confirmed both by Kant's insistence that phenomena are appearances of independently existing objects (2:397; 61), and by his by now familiar claim that the intellect represents the "objects themselves" (see Chapter 4).[4]

3 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). My discussion is based on the account of the *Dissertation* offered in chapter 1 of Guyer's book, pp. 13–24.

4 It is further supported by the fact that Kant seems to assign to the intellect the function of providing noumenal knowledge of the same objects that appear to the senses (cf. Kant's "principle of the intelligible world" at 2:407; 74–75). There, Kant's claim seems to be that sensitive and intellectual principles merely provide different ways of repre-

Although Guyer admits that such passages suggest the epistemological reading, he denies that Kant can be taken to argue that the same set of objects that "appear" to the senses are represented as they actually are through the intellect. Indeed, according to Guyer, the view that the two faculties represent the same set of objects is based on an erroneous presupposition, to wit, that the epistemic role of the intellect is to conceive of the same set of objects as are sensibly intuited.[5] In the first *Critique,* Kant describes the role of the understanding similarly; there the understanding functions to provide the necessary concepts by means of which the data given through sensibility are thought as objects. The problem, as Guyer notes, is that Kant often seems to argue in the *Dissertation* that the pure intellect functions by furnishing representations of objects that in no wise manifest themselves to sensuality.[6] Clearly, Kant has in mind the concept of spiritual being, and such a being (i.e., the soul), if it exists, is not itself an "object" of sensitive cognition. From this, Guyer concludes that the distinction between sensitive and intellectual cognition in the *Dissertation* is akin to the *Critique*'s distinction between sensibility and *reason;* rather than each faculty furnishing different representations (of "different epistemic value") of a single set of objects, each furnishes representations of ontologically distinct sets of objects.

Guyer is most certainly correct to point out that Kant sometimes seems to assign to the "intellect" functions that are, in the *Critique,* reserved for the ostensibly distinct, third activity of thought referred to as "reason." Such functions include the representation of "exemplars" and the demand for systematic unity. But although this fact certainly supports Guyer's rejection of any interpretation that views the intellect simply or even primarily in terms of Kant's later theory of the understanding, it does not justify reading the *Dissertation* solely in terms of the later theory of reason. Indeed, the fact that the intellect of the *Dissertation* functions in ways that adumbrate both the faculty of the under-

senting the same underlying reality, or different points of view from which the same objects may be considered, and not different kinds of objects.

5 Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* pp. 15–16. Because the presupposition (that the epistemic function of the intellect is to conceive of the same objects as are represented by the senses) amounts to nothing more than a restatement of the epistemological reading, Guyer's position reduces to a charge of question begging. Given all of the textual evidence for the epistemological reading, however, this charge is hardly justified.

6 Ibid., pp. 16–17. Guyer there goes so far as to conclude that the idea of a faculty of knowledge that uses pure concepts in empirical knowledge is entirely missing in the *Dissertation.*

standing and that of reason suggests that the presentation of the two readings as exclusive alternatives is misleading. Moreover, it is only if one assumes, as Guyer does, an ontological interpretation of the ideas of reason that this interpretation will work. Although it is premature to discuss the status of the ideas in the *Critique* here, we shall see that the ontological reading is seriously misleading (see Chapter 4).

Even apart from this, however, there are good reasons to question the notion that Kant takes the pure intellect in the *Dissertation* to provide direct access to really existing (particular) noumenal entities. For one thing, Kant repeatedly suggests that the pure intellect provides us with concepts of great abstractness and generality (thing or substance *in general*), and this is difficult to reconcile with the suggestion that the intellect gives access to any particular (noumenal) object. However, Kant does seem to think that intellectual cognitions reveal truths about "things as they are." More specifically, he takes the general conceptions "given" to the intellect to be universally true of whatever particular things that exist. Of course, these intellectual cognitions themselves do not yield knowledge of particular noumenal objects that exist apart from sensible ones; rather the intellect gives us access to the intelligible forms of things. In its real capacity, according to Kant, the intellect has two distinct uses: the elenctic and the dogmatic.

The distinction between the elenctic and dogmatic uses of the intellect is most profitably viewed as a distinction between two different functions (ends) of the concepts given through the real use of the intellect.[7] More specifically, the concepts in question are said to be given "by the very nature of the understanding," and not to have been "abstracted" from "any use of the senses" or to "contain any form of sensitive cognition as such" (2:394; 386). The distinction is presented as follows:

> The concepts of the understanding [*Intellectualium*] have, in particular, two ends: The first is *elenctic,* in virtue of which they have a negative use, where, namely, they keep what is sensitively conceived distinct from noumena, and, although they do not advance science by the breadth of a fingernail, they nonetheless preserve it from the contagion of errors. The second end is *dogmatic,* and in accordance with it the general principles of the pure understanding, such as are displayed in ontology or in rational psychology, lead to some paradigm [*exemplar*], which can only be

7 Kant distinguishes between the logical and real use of the intellect. See, e.g., 2:393–394; 56–57.

> conceived by the pure understanding and which is a common measure for all other things in so far as they are realities. (2:396; 388)

Kant's discussion of the elenctic use of intellectual concepts or noumena is both brief and vague. Although we are told that such use serves to keep "things conceived sensitively" (phenomena) away from noumena, Kant makes little effort to explain exactly how this is accomplished through the use of intellectual concepts. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the elenctic use of intellectual concepts must be construed as developing from the position of the *Dreams*. There, Kant argued that the limits of experience serve to highlight the boundary beyond which our conceptions lack data and content. To this extent, metaphysics, as the study of the limitations of reason, serves the purpose of illuminating the purely negative status of our rational conceptions. The negative use of metaphysics, although it yields no substantive knowledge, does succeed in setting limits to our inquiries into, say, rational spirits, and in so doing, it "completes" the discipline. Implicit in both the *Dissertation* and the *Dreams,* then, is the view that the intellect functions to extend our inquiries to the limit and, in this way, to maximize our knowledge.

It would appear, moreover, that Kant has in mind here something akin to that account which will be offered later in the *Critique,* of the noumenon in the "negative sense," by which he means a "thing so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition" (A252).[8] Kant's point is that the doctrine of sensibility entails an ability to think things without reference to our mode of intuition and so not simply as appearances but as "things in themselves" (cf. A252 and also B307). By claiming that the concept under consideration is to be understood as a noumenon only in the negative sense, Kant emphasizes in the *Critique* that such a concept provides no determinate knowledge of any object. Rather, he claims, the noumenon functions by "curbing the pretensions of sensibility" (A255/B311).

Such a function is clearly in line with the *Dissertation*'s elenctic use of the intellectual concepts. Here, as in both the *Dreams* and the *Critique,* Kant denies that the negative or elenctic use of noumena itself provides knowledge of things or advances science (2:396; 59). At least in its elenctic use, then, the intellect cannot be read to be providing access to or knowledge of any noumenal reality. At best, it suggests that we can abstractly conceive of things as "not sensible," as somehow conceived in

8 See also B307. See also Chapter 3.

abstraction from the sensitive conditions of our intuitions. As such, the negative use of intellectual concepts is consistent with the doctrine of the *Dreams*.

The question, then, is whether the dogmatic use of noumena provides us with representations of nonsensible objects. It must be conceded that Kant sometimes *suggests* that it does. For here, Kant tells us, the general principles of the pure intellect "issue into some exemplar," and this might suggest that the intellect is conceiving of some particular (individual) entity – for example, God. Even here, however, we must use caution in attributing to Kant the view that what are being represented are actual noumenal entities. The principles are said to issue into an exemplar that is the common measure for all things "insofar as THEY are realities." Kant's point seems to be that the general principles of the pure intellect allow us to conceive of things in quite general terms, in accordance with an ideal (an exemplar) that is free from any admixture of the limitations imposed by our mode of intuition. This is far from saying that we have access to particular noumenal objects (e.g., a soul, or God) through the intellect alone. In the latter case, we would be granted an intellectual intuition, and Kant is quite explicit in his denial that we have any such intuition (cf. 2:397; 389).

In fact, there are a number of problems if we take Kant to be claiming to have direct intellectual access to particular noumenal entities. First, to read Kant in this way, one would have to assume that Kant had completely reversed all of his earlier views about the capacities of the human intellect, for it is characteristic of Kant to deny that the pure intellectual concepts at our disposal offer anything but the most abstract and general representations of things. This position goes way back to the *Deutlichkeit,* and Kant does not seem to have wavered in its endorsement during the intervening years. To take such general and abstract concepts to yield access to any noumenal object in its own right would be to accuse Kant of an error already carefully detailed by Berkeley – that of moving from abstract and general concepts of things to the claim that there are actual entities perceived by the mind that are themselves abstract and general. Such an error is fairly obvious, and it seems unlikely that Kant would commit it. Instead, it seems fairly clear that Kant's assumption in the *Dissertation* is simply that the conditions of the understanding and thought are themselves universal, and thus that they enjoy a more general legitimacy than those of "sensuality." This claim is, of course, a comparative one. To say that the intellect yields concepts and principles of things as they are is to say that these concepts and

principles are not limited in their application to objects taken under the more restricted conditions under which we intuit them. Indeed, it suggests that the intellect functions to represent things quite apart from those subjective, sensible conditions. Construed in the elenctic sense, this means that the representations of the intellect provide us with an ability to think things indeterminately, for example, as "not spatial." But Kant clearly wants to say that this capacity of the intellect also issues into a dogmatic or real use in its own right, whereby it presumes to conceive of intelligible "grounds" for phenomena.

In line with this, it is worth noting that Kant suggests that the dogmatic use of the real intellect is unified by one (singular) kind of goal – to represent "noumenal perfection" by means of a pure idea.[9] Theoretically understood, this demand is answered when the general principles of the pure understanding lead to the idea of God as "exemplar" (2:396; 388). This idea seems to provide the common measure for all things insofar as they are realities and, in this sense, appears to reiterate Kant's contention that all phenomena (all realities) must refer to some common ground. Still, the idea of God here seems to function, for Kant, as an ideal archetype presupposed by the intellect for theoretical purposes. As we shall see presently, Kant is ambiguous about the status of this theoretical presupposition, and his ambiguity becomes clear as we examine the role of the "principles of harmony" in the *Dissertation*. For the present, we may note that Kant's theory of the intellect, and his claim that the intellect, unlike sensuality, provide only the most general principles for knowledge, provide the basis for an account of metaphysical error.

Illusion and the Fallacy of Subreption

Because Kant's aim in the *Dissertation* is to limit the application of sensitive principles to their own subjective limits, it seems reasonable to conclude that Kant takes our representation of intellectual concepts (pure ideas) to play a crucial role in "highlighting" the limits beyond which sensitive concepts and principles cannot be deployed. Although he takes the "pure ideas" to operate legitimately as rational principles, Kant clearly thinks that metaphysical error is generated because we confuse the status and role of these ideas and erroneously subject them to

9 Kant is explicit about referring to the concepts of the pure understanding as "pure ideas" at 2:394; 387.

the conditions for "sensitive" knowledge. Hence, section 5 of the *Dissertation* is devoted to a discussion on the "method in metaphysics concerning what is sensitive and what belongs to the understanding" (2:411; 406). The focus of the discussion is the previously noted "infection of sensitive cognition by cognition deriving from the understanding" (2:411; 407). According to Kant, such contagion functions not only in the *misapplication* of principles but also insofar as it actually "invents spurious principles themselves in the guise of axioms" (2:411; 407).[10] In order to avoid such contagion, the proper method must entail preventing the domestic principles of sensitive cognition from any application beyond their subjective limits (2:412; 407). The application of these principles beyond such limits (i.e., to objects not of sense but those qua thought through the pure intellect) is grounded in certain "illusions of the intellect" (*praestigiae intellectus;* 2:412; 407). Kant characterizes the latter as a "fallacy of subreption," and suggests that it occurs through the aforementioned "covert misuse of a sensitive concept, which is employed as if it were a characteristic mark deriving from the understanding" (2:412; 408).

> But since the illusions of the understanding, produced by the covert misuse of a sensitive concept, which is employed as if it were a characteristic mark deriving from the understanding, can be called (by analogy with the accepted meaning of the term) a fallacy of subreption, the confusion of what belongs to the understanding with what is sensitive will be the metaphysical fallacy of subreption (an intellectuated phenomenon, if the barbarous expression may be pardoned). (2:412–413; 407–408)

It is worth noting that the term "subreption" indicates a fallacy or error that specifically involves an illicit and surreptitious substitution of concepts and terms of one kind for those of another. For Kant, the term is oftentimes reserved for cases where we conflate and substitute concepts or principles of experience with those of pure reason. This use of the term "subreption" carries over into the *Critique,* and it is equally applicable here in the *Dissertation*. This use of the term also accords with the statements found in the *Lectures on Logic*. In those lectures, dating

10 The view that the conflation of sensitive and intellectual cognition is involved on the one hand in the misapplication of principles and on the other in the production of other (spurious) principles that falsely purport to be objectively valid (axioms) is carried over into the *Critique,* where it is transformed into the transcendental and the transcendent applications of the pure concepts, respectively.

from the early 1770s, Kant is reported by Blomberg to have identified the *vitium subreptionis* (the error of subreption) as stemming from an illicit "mixing" of concepts of experience and of reason.[11]

Although Kant's aims are not particularly clear, it may be that, in the preceding passage, he is trying to distinguish between two *different* fallacies, one involving a conflation of *concepts,* and the other a conflation of *things.* Perhaps, indeed, Kant wants to maintain that the judgmental fallacy, or conflation of concepts, carries with it a tendency to take subjective phenomena to be objective in an illusory fashion. The first of these, called simply the "fallacy of subreption," has already been touched upon. Here, Kant claims, the problem concerns the covert misuse of a sensitive concept as an intellectual mark (2:412; 81–82). As we have seen, such an error comes about by predicating sensitive concepts or principles of intellectually thought concepts of subjects, resulting in judgments that covertly use sensitive concepts as intellectual marks (2:412; 81–82). Kant's claim is that whereas intellectual concepts (predicates) represent the "condition without which we assert that the subject is not thinkable," sensitive concepts (predicates) merely represent the subjective condition of a "possible sensitive cognition" (2:412; 81). Thus, whereas any judgment that predicates an intellectual concept of a subject holds generally and objectively (applies to any and all objects themselves that are represented in the concept of the subject), a judgment that contains a sensitive predicate is only "valid according to subjective laws" and cannot be stated objectively. Consider the following:

> For whatever is *inconsistent with* the laws of the intellect and of reason is undoubtedly impossible. But anything which as being an object of pure reason simply *does not come under* the laws of intuitive cognition is not in the same position (2:389; 49).

> For should the predicate be an intellectual concept, its relation to the subject of the judgment, however much the subject be sensitively thought, always denotes a mark which applies to the object itself. But *should the predicate be a sensitive concept,* since the laws of sensitive cognition are not conditions of the possibility of things themselves, it will not be valid of the *intellectually thought subject* of a judgment, and so will be unable to be enunciated objectively. (2:412n; 81–82)

11 See *Blomberg Logic* 24:255; 203. I have relied here on J. Michael Young's translation of Kant's *Lectures on Logic* in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

The fallacy of subreption is brought about by our failure to recognize the kind-distinction between the sensitive and intellectual cognition, with the result that sensitive and intellectual concepts are used in judgments without distinction. By this means intellectual concepts are subjected to sensible conditions. This fallacy, which sounds like an error in judgment, might include a judgment that subjects "substance in general" to spatiotemporal conditions. To do this, of course, is to *sensualize* an intellectually thought subject of a judgment. In line with this, Kant characterizes the *Dissertation* as a propaedeutic discipline designed to "teach" the distinction between sensitive and intellectual cognition (2:395; 59).

In addition, Kant seems to want to suggest that this conflation of concepts belonging to different "faculties" leads to axioms or principles that presume to yield objective or metaphysical claims. To the extent that they do this, the axioms implicitly conflate intelligible and sensitive *objects*. Kant refers to this other aspect of the error as the "metaphysical fallacy of subreption," claiming (in a similar fashion) that it occurs through the "confusion of what belongs to the understanding with what is sensitive" (2:412; 408). The metaphysical fallacy is clearly grounded in and involves the above conflation and misapplication of concepts.[12] What distinguishes the metaphysical fallacy from the earlier conflation of cognitions is the fact that it involves "*intellectualizing phenomena*." The result is the production of "subreptic (hybrid) axioms" that try to "pass off what is sensitive as if it necessarily belonged to a concept of the understanding" (2:412; 408). Although Kant himself does not emphasize this point, this error does not seem identical with the previously discussed fallacy of subreption *simpliciter*. Whereas the above subreption suggests a difficulty with holding intellectual concepts to sensitive conditions, the metaphysical fallacy appears to involve taking the consequent subreptive principles to yield direct knowledge of things. At first glance, it appears that, despite their similarities, the problem of "sensualizing an intellectual concept" is distinct from "intellectualizing phenomena." Nonetheless, Kant's point seems to be that insofar as the conditions of the intellect and sensuality are conflated, certain "hybrid" principles are produced that presume to yield knowledge about objects generally, without taking into consideration

12 This is confirmed by Kant's claim that the subreptic axioms that generate metaphysical error themselves *arise from* a series of illusions according to which sensitive cognitions "pass under the guise of" cognitions that are intellectual. See *Diss.* 2:413; 83.

whether the objects in question are being considered as phenomena or noumena.

The question is why, given Kant's claim that intellectual conditions are universally true, this should be a problem at all. In response, it may be noted that the error comes about because the conditions for sensitive cognition are construed to be subjectively limited, whereas the conditions for intellectual cognition are not. In the *Critique,* Kant wants to argue not only that sensitive principles must be limited but also that intellectual conditions must be as well. In the *Dissertation,* however, Kant holds such "spurious axioms" responsible for the deceptive principles that he claims have "disastrously permeated the whole of metaphysics" (2:412; 408).

Kant's suggestion is that the "metaphysical error" arises from our erroneously taking the originally fallacious or contaminated judgments to be objective in the sense that they yield knowledge of objects themselves. Kant offers what appears to be an elaboration on this point by claiming that the subreptic axioms that characterize the "metaphysical errors" or fallacies are each grounded in an illusion of a specific kind. More precisely, he argues that each of the illusions that ground the subreptic axioms may be subsumed under one of three possible forms. The three species of illusion are articulated as follows:

1 The same sensitive condition under which alone the *intuition* of an object is possible is the condition of the *possibility* itself of the *object.*
2 The same sensitive condition under which alone *the things given can be collated with one another to form the intellectual concept of the object* is also the condition of the possibility itself of the object.
3 The same sensitive condition under which some *object* met with can alone be *subsumed under a given intellectual concept* is also the condition of the possibility itself of the object. (2:413; 83–84)

Each of these illusions shares the property of a conflation of subjective and objective conditions, and, at least in this regard, Kant's diagnosis of metaphysical error is consistent with those earlier accounts examined in the *Beweisgrund,* the *Deutlichkeit,* and the *Dreams.* More particularly, each involves taking the subjective conditions under which sensitive cognition is possible to be objective conditions that determine the possibility of the existence of objects that are independent of the subjective forms of human intuition (objects themselves). In the first case, this conflation is most obvious. Here, one straightforwardly takes

the subjective conditions of sensible cognition to be universal ontological conditions. As an example, Kant cites the proposition, "Whatever is, is somewhere and somewhen" (2:414; 409). By means of this spurious principle, anything whatsoever that exists is erroneously thought under the conditions of space and time. Kant explicitly cites the difficulties that stem from such a principle when it is applied to spiritual beings (either those "in" or "outside of" the world). Only on this illicit assumption do we find ourselves entangled in the "knot" explicated earlier in the *Dreams,* to wit: assigning some mysterious "place" to the soul, or to God.

The second illusion is, as Kant himself notes, far less obvious, but it basically involves cases where the intellectual concept of an object that we have is itself secretly corrupted or contaminated by the fact that subjective sensible conditions are smuggled into it. Thus, anticipating the later "mathematical antinomies" in the *Critique,* Kant notes that any distinct cognition of either a magnitude or a series requires the thought of successive coordination; and because the latter is an explicitly temporal notion, our concepts of magnitudes and series are themselves contaminated by "time." Because of this contamination we ultimately (and erroneously) conclude that an infinite series of coordinates is in all respects impossible. For we rightly acknowledge that any regressive series must have some limit, that the whole of the series is itself dependent on some "ground." Nevertheless, the subreptive element involves conflating this purely intellectual necessity that there be some "limit" with the explicitly temporal requirement for some definite Beginning (in time) (2:415; 410–411). In a similar fashion, Kant contends, our legitimate claim that bodies consist of simples is erroneously subrepted into the sensible claim that any compound has a definite number of parts.

In the third case, our intellectual concept is of itself "pure" or untainted, but may not be sufficient (by itself) to allow us to determine whether particular cases in experience fall under it. Such is the case with the concepts of contingency and necessity. Kant cites the following proposition as an example: "Whatever exists contingently at some time did not exist" (2:417; 413). The problem here is fairly obvious and involves taking the "subjective" conditions that allow us, as finite epistemological subjects, to determine when something is contingent to be objective, universal, conditions for any contingent being whatsoever. Because it is the case that the primary (perhaps the only) mark of contingency available to us is the possible nonexistence of the thing in

question, we falsely assume that whatever in general is contingent must have, at some time, not existed. In fact, according to Kant, we are only entitled to assume a "subjective law" that tells us that if we cannot establish for any x that at some point it did not exist, then it follows that we do not have any sufficient indication of its contingency. This, however, is a far cry from establishing its necessity.

On what are these illusions grounded? As is Kant's wont, each of these instances of error is ultimately traced back to one fairly simple fallacious syllogism. Kant suggests that we naturally fall victim to the illusion or fallacy of subreption because our mode of intuition is restricted to that of the sensible. His claim is that this fallacy arises from an invalid syllogistic conclusion. Starting with the (for Kant) valid principle that "Whatever cannot be cognized by any intuition at all is thereby not thinkable" (2:413; 83), and with the fact that all *our* intuition is sensible, we conclude that whatever cannot be cognized by sensible intuition is impossible. The faulty inference may be stated as follows:

1 Whatever is not thinkable at all by any intuition is impossible.
2 Whatever is not cognizable by sensible intuition is not thinkable.
3 Therefore, whatever is not cognizable by sensible intuition is impossible.

The conclusion is fallacious because, as we have seen, sensible concepts merely represent the condition of a "possible *sensible* intuition." Consequently, the fact that we cannot experience empirical objects under any but sensible intuitions does not place the conceivability (and hence possibility) of things thought qua independently of these conditions out of the question. In other words, we succumb to an illusion that consists of assuming that the subjective conditions for our intuition are objective and universally applicable. Given this, Kant contends that the method for avoiding philosophical error involves carefully attending to the distinction between intellectual and sensitive cognition.

Up to this point, Kant's argument has been designed to show that error comes about by a failure to distinguish between the sensitive and intellectual conditions of knowledge, with the result that judgments that incorrectly apply the conditions of sense to intellectual concepts are produced. In this, Kant's position seems to be that metaphysical error stems from faulty judgments. Faulty judgments, in turn, stem from the unacknowledged conflation of two different sources of representations, a conflation itself grounded in the illusion that the subjective mode of

our intuition is objective. It is, indeed, the miscommunication between sensibility and the understanding that leads to error. But Kant does not stop here. Rather surprisingly, he goes on to suggest that we are also forced to cognize in accordance with a set of principles of the pure understanding, which are themselves inherently delusive. Kant refers to these principles as the principles of harmony.

The Principles of Harmony

In addition to the subreptic principles just articulated, Kant cites a set of delusive principles that stem solely from the understanding. Such principles, dubbed the principles of convenience or harmony (*principia convenientiae*), issue solely from the laws of the understanding and yet present themselves as objectively valid:

> In addition to the subreptic principles, there are also certain other principles, which are closely related to them. They do not, it is true, communicate to a given concept of the understanding any taint of sensible cognition. But the understanding, however, is nonetheless so deluded by them that it takes them for arguments which derive from the object, although they only commend themselves to us *in virtue of their harmonising* with the free and extensive use of the understanding, as is appropriate to its particular nature. And thus, like the principles which have been enumerated by us above, they rest on *subjective* grounds, not, it is true, on the laws of sensitive cognition, but on the laws of cognition which belongs to the understanding itself. (*Diss.* 2:418; 414)

As examples of these delusive principles, Kant cites the assumptions that everything takes place in accordance with the order of nature and that there is causal unity in the world, as well as the postulate that matter neither comes into nor passes out of existence. Despite the merely subjective status of these "rules of judging," Kant argues that we cling to them as axioms precisely because their assumption is necessary for the operation of the understanding. Indeed, Kant claims that without the assumption of these principles, the understanding would be "scarcely able" to make any judgments about a given object at all (2:418; 414). If we deny that all events take place in accordance with the order of nature, for instance, the understanding would be stripped of its purpose in investigating phenomena in accordance with understood and constant laws. Similarly, the assumption of causal unity operates as a subjective demand that motivates our attempts to secure an ultimate

(and ultimately singular) principle, ground, or explanation, for all phenomena. In accordance with these principles, we must also assume that the matter of the universe is itself constant. If, according to Kant, matter is, on the contrary, transitory and in flux, then the efforts of the understanding to advance its knowledge by explaining phenomena in accordance with universal and constant laws would be undermined (2:419; 415).

Such principles, which prefigure reason's theoretical demand for systematic unity in the *Critique,* are unique because they do not flow from any subreption of sensible and intellectual conditions. In fact, Kant seems to be suggesting that the problem here centers on taking what are merely "subjective rules" of the understanding to be objective in a delusive fashion. Even despite their inherently delusive nature, however, he argues that we cannot help but assume them. Here, the necessity attaching to the adoption of these principles, or postulates, stems from a purely *subjective* source; more specifically, their adoption is made necessary because the understanding is constrained to operate in accordance with its *own laws* and its *demand* that the field of our knowledge of phenomena be extended, advanced and, presumably, brought to completion. In Kant's words, these principles of convenience or harmony "rest on the conditions under which it seems to the understanding easy and practical to deploy its own perspicacity" (2:418; 414). Here, Kant appears to be moving toward the notion that the project of knowledge acquisition already carries along with it certain theoretical presuppositions. The assumption of, for example, causal unity is a necessary presupposition in our attempts to advance a unified explanation for phenomena.

Unfortunately, Kant says relatively little about these delusive principles. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that their introduction significantly complicates the position in the *Dissertation*. At the very least, the suggestion that the intellect itself (here without any problematic admixture of sensitive conditions) might be the source of necessary illusions indicates that Kant does not take the understanding to be in any unqualified way the ground for a priori knowledge of "things as they are." Indeed, Kant's position indicates that the very functioning of the intellect carries with it certain commitments to metaphysical theses or postulates whose legitimacy is ambiguous. This in turn suggests that, despite its apparent enthusiasm over the possibility of acquiring metaphysical knowledge through the pure intellect, the position in the *Dissertation* is considerably mitigated by Kant's recognition that the theo-

retical presuppositions of such a project are themselves lacking objective support and justification. Although these assumptions of causal unity, or the constancy of matter, may be subjectively necessary for us, Kant appears to be unsettled about whether they have any independent justification for use as principles yielding knowledge of reality. As we shall see, this position becomes the basis for a critique of "pure reason" and for the doctrine of illusion central to that critique.

Although this discussion is brief, it does serve to emphasize Kant's growing concern to develop an account of metaphysical error and illusion in conjunction with his more recent distinction between the intellectual and sensitive conditions of cognition. The account in the *Dissertation,* as we have seen, has as its principal aim the limitation of the use of sensible cognitions. Kant was perhaps committed to this by his own theory of the intellect, for it was not until he distinguished between the understanding and reason that he could attempt to expose the rational grounds of metaphysical illusion without undermining the epistemic legitimacy of the intellect (understanding). The distinction between reason and the understanding, then, is crucial to the doctrine of transcendental illusion offered in the *Critique.* In order to understand this doctrine, however, it is necessary to examine the associated theory of the understanding and its interaction with sensibility. As we shall see presently, the view that judgmental error is generated by the "contagion" of sensible and intellectual concepts is carried over from the *Dissertation* into the Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique.*

II

FALLACIES AND ILLUSIONS IN THE *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

3

THE TRANSCENDENTAL EMPLOYMENT OF THE UNDERSTANDING AND THE CONFLATION OF APPEARANCES AND THINGS IN THEMSELVES

In the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant detailed two different kinds of illusory principles: those which issue from the confusion of sensitive with intellectual conditions of judgment (the "subreptic axioms"), and those which issue solely from the pure intellect (the "principles of harmony"). Kant essentially sustains this distinction in the *Critique.* The principles of convenience or harmony reappear in modified form in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic in conjunction with Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion. The confusion of sensible with intellectual conditions of judgments, on the other hand (and the attending conflation of appearances and things in themselves), emerges in connection with a separate theory of judgmental error in the Transcendental Analytic. Kant carefully distinguishes between the "logical" error of judgment and the doctrine of transcendental illusion. Whereas the former is detailed in the Transcendental Analytic, the theory of illusion is presented in the Transcendental Dialectic. In this chapter, I am concerned with the theory of judgmental error in the Analytic.

Even with regard to the latter, however, it seemed that in the *Dissertation* Kant presented a twofold account of fallacy. In the first place, Kant argued, "sensitive cognitions" are taken with "intellectual cognitions." The fallacy of subreption, in turn, gives rise to its metaphysical counterpart according to which sensitive objects (phenomena) are confused with intellectual objects (noumena).[1] In this chapter I examine the way in which this "twofold" view of judgmental error is carried over into the *Critique of Pure Reason.* In this connection, I argue that the *Dis-*

1 Kant refers to this latter error as the "metaphysical fallacy of subreption." See his *Inaugural Dissertation* (2:412; 82). For a more detailed examination of the *Dissertation,* see Chapter 2.

sertation's account of illusion undergoes some important revisions, which stem from Kant's concern to distinguish between reason and the understanding. Accordingly, Kant locates transcendental illusion in the third and presumably distinct activity of thought characteristic of reason, while attempting to understand the conflation of phenomena and noumena as a unique fallacy or judgmental error at the level of the understanding.[2] In the *Critique,* this conflation is usually understood to involve taking appearances for things in themselves.

That the conflation of appearances and things in themselves is importantly linked to metaphysical illusion is a point made clear throughout Kant's writings. We have already seen this in connection with the *Inaugural Dissertation,* where Kant went so far as to identify illusion with the twofold conflation of sensible and intellectual concepts and objects.[3] In the *Prolegomena,* too, Kant repeatedly states that the faulty judgments that generate error are themselves grounded in a confusion of sensible and intellectual conditions.[4] Despite this, the arguments in the Dialectic of the *Critique* against metaphysics are more often than not evaluated independently of any particularly detailed consideration of the accounts offered in the Analytic of the amphiboly of concepts and the confusion of appearances and things in themselves. Similarly, Kant's concern with these last conflations is frequently discussed independently of any extended attempt to illuminate the associated doctrine of transcendental illusion. The general result is that both the relation and the distinction between the arguments in the Analytic concerning the amphiboly of concepts and those in the Dialectic concerning transcendental illusion remain obscure.

Given this, I focus in this chapter on Kant's attempt to show how judgmental error at the level of the understanding involves the conflation of phenomena and noumena. The chapter is divided into four parts. First, I provide some background for the ensuing discussions, clarifying in particular the general relation, suggested in the Introduction to Transcendental Logic, between the aims of the Analytic and those of the Dialectic. Next, I focus on the arguments associated with

2 Kant takes this illusion to represent an apparently unique kind of transcendental subreption. See Chapter 4.

3 In the *Dreams,* too, "delusion" (*Wahn*) involves taking empty concepts (concepts lacking sensible data) to be given as objects of experience. For a discussion of this, see Chapter 1.

4 See *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können,* 4:332–366.

Kant's claim that the "transcendental employment" of the understanding is dialectical. Here, I examine those arguments from the Transcendental Deduction and the Schematism chapter which are designed to show that the transcendental employment of the understanding arises in conjunction with the attempt to acquire knowledge of objects in general. Insofar as the attempt to determine the nature of objects in general characterizes general metaphysics (ontology), I also note how the criticisms of the transcendental employment of the understanding entail, for Kant, the impossibility of any science of ontology. In the third section, I explicate Kant's "transcendental distinction" between appearances and things in themselves, as well as his claim that the transcendental employment of concepts involves their application to things in themselves. I then conclude by suggesting that, although he is not himself explicit about it, Kant is committed to the position that there are a number of distinct ways in which different concepts can be employed transcendentally.

Preliminary Remarks

A challenge immediately confronts anyone who hopes to detail both the distinction and the connection between the Analytic's discussion of the amphibolous use of concepts (the conflation of appearances and things in themselves) and the doctrine of transcendental illusion offered in the Dialectic.[5] Indeed, with respect to the Analytic alone, it seems possible to identify two rather distinct lines of argument concerning the amphibolous use of concepts. On the other hand, the amphiboly of concepts plays a role in Kant's general (and by now familiar) rejection of the attempt to acquire metaphysical knowledge of anything whatsoever simply through the procedure of analysis. In relation to this, as we shall see, Kant's criticisms of Leibniz in the Amphiboly chapter are designed to undermine the attempt to draw substantive metaphysical conclusions about things in general (*Dinge überhaupt*) simply from the highly abstract concepts of reflection and/or principles of *general* or *formal* logic (e.g., the principle of contradiction). This kind of criticism, as we have seen in Chapter 1, was offered as early as the *Dilucidatio*. On the other hand, an amphibolous use of concepts also appears to

5 I have already suggested that the former may be understood to correspond to Kant's more general rejection of ontology (general metaphysics), whereas the latter plays a somewhat more specific role in Kant's critique of transcendent, or special, metaphysics.

function in what seems to be a distinct rejection of the attempt to acquire metaphysical knowledge of objects in general (*Objekt überhaupt*) from concepts or principles of *transcendental* logic (e.g., the categories).[6] This last criticism, which emphasizes the impossibility of acquiring metaphysical knowledge from concepts of objects independently of sensible data, goes back to the *Beweisgrund* and the *Dreams*.[7] In the *Critique,* the first of these errors involves what Kant calls the "amphiboly of concepts of reflection," whereas the second pertains to the conflation of phenomena (appearances) and noumena (things in themselves).[8] That Kant wants in some sense to distinguish between these two errors is evidenced in the Introduction to the Transcendental Logic, where he specifically distinguishes between general and transcendental logic (cf. A58/B83–A64/B88).

General logic, according to Kant, exhibits the "absolutely necessary rules of thought" without which there can be no employment whatsoever of the understanding (A52/B76–A53/B77). Kant's claim is that the agreement of knowledge with the purely logical or formal demands of the understanding is a necessary condition of truth. General logic is thus said to be a "canon of judgment," and provides a means of distinguishing between cases where putative knowledge claims are logically or formally coherent (i.e., noncontradictory) and cases where they are not (A61/B86). But because formal consistency in no way guarantees the objective or material truth of a claim ("$p \vee -p$" may be in accordance with the formal rules of thought, and yet nothing whatsoever follows from this as to the truth or falsity of p itself), Kant argues that "no one can venture with the help of logic alone to judge regarding objects, or to make any assertion" (A60–61/B85).

The claim that general logic by itself fails to provide the grounds for objective assertions reflects Kant's view that such logic concerns only the form of thought in general (i.e., in abstraction from all particular content of thought). The rules of general logic, although true a priori,

6 It should be noted that I am drawing this distinction between "objects" and "things" in general only for purposes of exegetical clarity, and specifically as a means of identifying cases that involve the misuse of transcendental, as opposed to general, principles. Kant himself is not consistent in his use of terms, and sometimes refers to the transcendental employment of the understanding as the attempt to acquire knowledge of things in general. See, e.g., A239/B298.

7 For a discussion of these works, see Chapter 1.

8 Kant suggests that the amphiboly of concepts, like the conflation of phenomena and noumena, arises from the confusion of the empirical and transcendental employments of the understanding. See A61/B316.

are not concerned with the (objective) relation between understanding on the one hand, and objects on the other. Hence, such rules cannot be viewed as a priori generative of (or sufficient for) any metaphysical knowledge of reality.[9] Such a position obviously harkens back to those precritical writings in which Kant argues that analysis by itself is insufficient as a means to acquiring objective or material knowledge.[10] This claim grounds his criticisms in both the *Dilucidatio* and the *Dreams* of the attempt to deduce, *more geometrico,* substantive truths from merely formal principles. Indeed, it is precisely this attempt to derive substantive knowledge from formal principles of *general* logic that is first taken up and criticized in the Introduction to the logic of the first *Critique*. Consider the following:

> There is, however, something so tempting in the possession of an art so specious, through which we give to all our knowledge, however uninstructed we may be in regard to its content, the form of understanding, that general logic, which is merely a canon of judgment, has been employed as if it were an organon for the actual production of at least the semblance of [*des Blendwerks*] objective assertions, and has thus been misapplied. General Logic, when thus treated as an organon, is called Dialectic. (A61/B86)

In addition to criticizing the use of *general* logic as an organon, however, Kant goes on to argue against such use with respect to the principles of "*transcendental* logic." Unlike general logic, which is a discipline concerned with the laws that govern the logical relation between thoughts, Kant characterizes "transcendental logic" as a discipline that centers on "such knowledge as concerns the possibility of knowledge *a priori* or its employment *a priori*" (A61/B81).[11] As Kitcher notes, the term "transcendental" is used by Kant in at least two distinct senses as regards the relation between thought and its objects.[12] First, insofar as transcendental logic abstracts from all empirical content of thought,

9 General logic, then, is a criterion for evaluating the coherence or formal validity of claims, the content of which is acquired independently of logic. Cf. A60–61/B85; A63–64/B88.

10 Most relevant here are the essay on syllogistic figures, the *Dilucidatio* and the *Träume*. See Chapter 1.

11 Unlike pure general logic, which abstracts from all relation of knowledge to an object, transcendental logic exhibits the laws of understanding "solely insofar as they relate *a priori* to objects" (B82).

12 Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 184.

"transcendental" is frequently taken to indicate an investigation into the a priori (nonempirical, or pure) thought of objects. In this regard, "transcendental logic" is seen as a discipline concerned with those rules for thinking objects which hold independently the conditions of our sensibility (A56/B80–A57/B82). Second, insofar as transcendental logic is concerned to explicate the conditions under which pure thought can be applied to objects, "trancendental" also indicates the investigation into the necessary conditions under which any knowledge of objects is possible. Thus, in the Transcendental Analytic Kant is concerned both with exhibiting a set of concepts and principles that have their source solely in the pure understanding, and with determining the conditions under which these concepts may be used in the knowledge of objects. To this extent, transcendental logic, like general logic, is said to provide a canon of judgment (A63/B88).

The Transcendental Analytic is to be distinguished from an analytic of general logic by the fact that whereas the latter exhibits the formal (logical) conditions that must be met by any or all judgments, regardless of content (i.e., those of formal validity), the former exhibits those "transcendental" conditions which must be met if thought is to apply to objects (i.e., those of objective validity). This explains why Kant takes the analytic of transcendental logic to relate to the discipline of ontology – that is, the possibility of acquiring metaphysical (synthetic a priori) knowledge of objects as such. Indeed, as Heimsoeth has noted, Kant repeatedly links his transcendental philosophy (more particularly, the Transcendental Analytic) to ontology, that is, the systematic explication of the most general, pure modes of knowledge that relate to objects in general (Axii–Axiii; A844/B872–A846/B873).[13] Although Kant takes the Transcendental Analytic to be addressing issues traditionally subsumed under general metaphysics, he ultimately uses his arguments in order to reject the possibility of a general science of ontology.

Kant's claim is that, although the pure concepts and principles of the understanding are transcendental in both of these senses, they are not in themselves sufficient for the synthetic knowledge of objects. Hence,

13 Among those who discuss this issue, see Heinz Heimsoeth, *Tranzendentale Dialektik. Ein Commentar zu Kants Kritik d. reinen Vernunft,* 4 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967); Gottfried Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science,* trans. P. G. Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955); F. E. England, *Kant's Conception of God* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), esp. p. 206.

in contrast to the *Inaugural Dissertation,* Kant emphasizes that the principles of the pure understanding, taken alone, are no more capable of yielding synthetic knowledge than is general logic. Indeed, as with general logic, he warns that the attempt to deploy the Transcendental Analytic as an organon is dialectical:

> The understanding is led to incur the risk of making, with a mere show of rationality, a material use of its pure and merely formal principles, and of passing judgments upon objects without distinction – upon objects which are not given us, nay, perhaps cannot in any way be given. Since, properly, this transcendental analytic should be used only as a canon for passing judgment upon the empirical employment of the understanding, it is misapplied if appealed to as an organon of its general and unlimited application, and if consequently we venture, with the pure understanding alone, to judge synthetically, to affirm and to decide regarding objects in general. The employment of the understanding then becomes dialectical. The second part of transcendental logic must therefore form a critique of this dialectical illusion, and is called transcendental dialectic. (A63–64/B88)

This last quotation clearly indicates that the task of the upcoming Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique* is to expose those sophistical metaphysical claims or arguments generated in conjunction with the attempt to deduce truths about abstractly conceived objects specifically from the pure concepts or principles of *transcendental* (as opposed to general) logic.[14] Insofar as the critique of special metaphysics is re-

14 From this, it may be supposed that Kant's claims about the "dialectics" of general and transcendental logic provide a means for distinguishing between the aims of the Analytic and those of the Dialectic. In line with such a view, the amphiboly of concepts detailed in the Analytic would concern the dialectical use of concepts and principles from formal or general logic, concepts and principles that are distinct from those transcendental principles erroneously deployed in the domain of special metaphysics and criticized by Kant in the Dialectic. And indeed, it is tempting to use such a distinction in order to differentiate between the two kinds of misemployments of the understanding, the transcendental and the transcendent, rejected by Kant in the Analytic and the Dialectic, respectively. Despite this, there are serious problems posed by such a view. Among these is the fact that it leaves unexplained how the criticism of the misemployment of principles of general logic relates to Kant's overall arguments, or even why Kant would want to include a critique of the dialectic of general logic in his analytic of transcendental logic. Moreover, as I have already mentioned, the transcendental analytic contains what appears to be two lines of argument, one against the characteristically Leibnizian misuse of logical or formal principles, another against the misuse of transcendental concepts or principles. Because, as we have seen, the concepts and principles of transcendental (not those of general) logic specifically concern the relation be-

served for the Dialectic, it also suggests that Kant wants to separate his criticisms of ontology (*metaphysical generalis*) from those of special metaphysics (*metaphysica specialis*). Accordingly, as the first step toward showing that pure concepts yield no direct knowledge of the rather specific transcendent objects that concern the disciplines of *special* metaphysics, Kant undertakes to demonstrate that such concepts are incapable by themselves of yielding metaphysical knowledge of any object whatsoever. This is accomplished, in the Analytic, by demonstrating the errors involved in the attempt to acquire metaphysical knowledge of "objects in general." Moreover, insofar as the ontologist's attempt to acquire metaphysical knowledge of objects in general itself corresponds, for Kant, to the "transcendental employment" of the understanding, his strategy may be understood to involve showing that (and how) the transcendental employment of the understanding is dialectical.

The Transcendental Employment of the Understanding

The arguments concerning the transcendental employment of the understanding draw on Kant's distinction between the role of the pure categories as logical functions of judgment on the one hand and as "transcendental concepts" on the other. The distinction between the "logical" and the "transcendental" status of the pure categories is very roughly analogous to the distinction between general and transcendental logic. As we have seen, logic is deemed "general" insofar as it abstracts from all content of knowledge (and hence from all differences in its objects) and concerns only the mere form of thought (A54–B79). So too, in abstraction from all empirical content of knowledge, the categories express merely the logical form of thinking as such. Correlatively, just as logic is "transcendental" insofar as it concerns the a priori relation between knowledge and its objects, the categories are "transcendental" insofar as they operate as a priori rules for the synthesis of intuitively provided data into determinate concepts of objects. As such, the categories are necessary conditions for the knowledge of any objective order, and because of this the term "transcendental" may simi-

tween thought and its objects, Kant's rejection of ontology centers on the misuse of these transcendental principles. Considerations such as these suggest that what is needed is an account of Kant's arguments that can illuminate the way in which both the amphiboly of concepts and the conflation of appearances and things in themselves are related not only to Kant's criticisms in the Dialectic, but indeed, to his rejection of ontology and the transcendental employment of the understanding as well.

larly be understood in this context to refer to the status of the categories as necessary conditions of possible experience.

The task of demonstrating the transcendental status of the categories is undertaken in the Transcendental Deduction, the general aim of which is to establish the objective reality of the categories – to show how nonempirical concepts can be justifiably said to apply a priori to objects of experience. The need to justify the use of such concepts generally follows from the *Dissertation*'s kind-distinction between the faculties, and with it the new recognition in the *Critique* that objects given to the senses might be so constituted as not to conform to the conditions of the understanding and thought (cf. B123). Kant himself articulates this problem in the oft-cited letter to Herz of 1772. There he expresses growing concern over the inadequacy of the *Dissertation* to explain how concepts generated solely from the pure intellect could "agree with" or refer to mind-independent objects.[15] It is well known that this problem drives the need for a deduction of the categories in the *Critique,* where Kant undertakes to establish some connection between the pure concepts of the understanding and the objects that are given through sensibility (appearances). Kant argues that the pure categories are to be regarded as principles of synthetic knowledge only insofar as these concepts can be applied to some given manifold of sensible intuition. The B Deduction argument, with which I am concerned, is commonly acknowledged to proceed in two parts.[16] In the first part (B130–144) Kant wants to establish a necessary connection *first* between the categories and *objects in general,* and in the *second* part (B150–165), between the categories and *appearances.*[17] In conjunction with the first part of

15 See letter to Herz, Ak. 10:130. For an interesting discussion of this problem, see Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 18–26.

16 It should be noted that there is a great deal of controversy as to how one should interpret Kant's division of the B Deduction into two parts. Insofar as I am concerned primarily with the discussion of the transcendental employment of the categories, and not with the overall proof structure of the Deduction, I shall not enter into this controversy here. Without going into this matter, however, I should say that I am following Henry E. Allison's account of the Deduction. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), ch. 7, pp. 133–172. For more on the proof structure of the Deduction, see Dieter Henrich, "The Proof-Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction," *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969): 640–659, and, more recently, Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge,* esp. pp. 59–72.

17 Sections 15–20. Kant generally justifies the application of the categories to appearances (empirical objects) by claiming to show that they express the necessary conditions under which any object of the senses can be experienced. Hence, in the second part of the

the Deduction Kant introduces the idea of a transcendental employment of the understanding, and, hence, I focus on this.

The necessary connection between the pure concepts of the understanding and intuition in general marks the first step toward demonstrating the connection between such concepts and our (sensible) intuition. Such a connection demonstrates not that the categories are conditions to which objects given in accordance with our mode of sensibility (i.e., spatiotemporal objects, or appearances) must conform, but, more generally, that they are conditions to which objects given in any intuition whatsoever must conform (i.e., that they are objectively valid). Another way of formulating the last claim would be to say that the categories are necessary in order to conceptualize or think objects of any (sensible) intuition.[18] Because Kant defines an object as that which is synthetically united according to these transcendental concepts, the categories, looked upon as carrying within themselves such a priori reference to any possible intuition (intuition in general), are so far said to "represent" "objects in general" (A245/B303, A248/B305). Accordingly, in the B Deduction Kant characterizes the concept of the object in general primarily in terms of the activity of thinking (i.e., the act that relates given intuition to an object [B304]). The categories (as modes for thinking objects of possible intuitions) are "concepts" of objects in general. In this way, Kant clearly wishes to characterize the "object in general" as the correlate of the act of thinking an object when such an act is undertaken or considered in abstraction from the particular mode in which objects are given to us in intuition. The question

B Deduction, Kant is concerned to demonstrate, from the specific mode in which empirical intuitions are given (i.e., space and time), that the categories have an empirical use by means of which they can justifiably be applied to empirical intuitions (B147–148). The argument for this latter claim will involve demonstrating a necessary connection between the transcendental unity of consciousness and any empirical consciousness (A117n). This, of course, will be generally accomplished by providing a justification and defense for a unique and synthetic proposition that asserts that "all the variety of empirical consciousness must be combined in one single self-consciousness" (A117n).

18 For the purposes of this discussion, I take it as given that the only intuitions available to use are sensible intuitions, and hence that throughout the Deduction Kant is primarily concerned to establish the connection between the categories and sensible intuitions. Accordingly, it should be kept in mind that by "intuition in general" Kant intends any sensible intuition. This issue is related to Kant's denial that we have any intellectual intuition by means of which we might know nonsensible objects, and this point is touched on later on in my discussion. Further argumentation for the claim that we have only sensible intuition is offered by Kant in section 1 of the Transcendental Aesthetic, A19/B34.

is whether any substantive knowledge can be said to follow from these conditions of thought. The answer, in the *Critique,* is no. In abstraction from the sensible conditions under which objects are given, the activity of thought expressed in the categories must be viewed simply as the power of combining and arranging material that must be given to it from elsewhere (cf. B146). In line with this, insofar as this first part of the argument has "abstracted" from the mode in which empirical intuitions are given, the activity of the pure understanding in the synthesis of the intuitive manifold is being taken in abstraction from its necessary relation to the sensible conditions under which objects are given to us in intuition – that is, space and time.

Because of this, the arguments related to the transcendental employment of the understanding may be construed in two rather different ways.[19] First, Kant uses the term "transcendental employment" in a "negative" sense, to wit, as designating the employment of the understanding so far as it is not a determination of any given sensible intuition. In this sense, the "transcendental employment" of the understanding refers to the synthetic activities of the understanding when these are viewed in abstraction from the actual sensible conditions under which they are undertaken. It would appear that such a conception is operative in the first part of the B Deduction discussed earlier, where Kant wants to specify *not* an *actual employment* of the understanding that is in and by itself *transcendental,* so much as *that* which is *transcendental* in the *real (and hence empirical) employment* of the understanding.

This accords with Kant's frequent denial that the synthetic activities of the understanding that ground the determination and knowledge of objects given in sensible intuition somehow take place independently of any mediation by sensible intuition. In the *Critique* Kant does not, as he did in the *Dissertation,* commit himself to the possibility of acquiring a priori synthetic knowledge of objects through a nonempirical, self-contained activity that is undertaken in separation from any given manifold of sensible intuition. On the contrary, it seems clear that his intention is simply to isolate those (necessary) conditions for the knowl-

19 The distinction I am proposing here (between the transcendental employment of the understanding construed in the positive sense and in the negative sense) corresponds to Kant's own distinction between the noumenon in the positive and in the negative senses. Although Kant himself does not, as I do here, draw such a distinction with regard to the transcendental employment of the understanding, doing so is certainly in line with his thinking on these matters and, as I hope to show, helpful in terms of clarifying his arguments.

edge of objects (the pure categories), which have their source solely in the pure understanding, and which therefore may be viewed as components of such knowledge that are different in kind from the sensible conditions of such knowledge.

This is precisely the point Kant wishes to make in claiming that the first part of the Deduction concerns the relation of the categories to (sensible) intuition in general. The latter is simply the concept of an intuitive manifold in which abstraction is made from all (empirical) intuitive content and hence from the particular conditions under which objects are given to us. To abstract from these conditions is to abstract from the very possibility of any application of the categories to empirical objects. In the Deduction, therefore, Kant claimed that the employment of the categories in relation to objects of intuition in general (i.e., the transcendental employment of the categories in this negative sense) is one through which knowledge of empirical objects cannot be given (B151).

Second, and in contrast to this, Kant sometimes seems to speak of the transcendental employment of the understanding in a positive sense, to wit, as an erroneous *application* of the pure concepts of the understanding as modes of knowledge which takes place entirely independently of any contribution from sensibility. The transcendental employment of the understanding construed in the positive sense, then, involves a "transcendental" application of concepts that distinguishes it from such "employment" taken negatively.[20] The expression here functions to pick out an *employment* of the understanding that presumes (erroneously) to be in and by itself *transcendental* and not simply a transcendental component of the understanding's employment. To employ the concepts of the understanding "transcendentally," then, would be to apply them to objects independently of those conditions of (our) sensible intuition in accordance with which objects are given. Insofar as objects must be given to us in sensible intuition under the conditions

20 Strictly speaking, the transcendental employment of the understanding taken negatively is really not an employment of the understanding at all. I have tried to express this notion by claiming that in this sense, the phrase serves to pick out "not an employment which is transcendental so much as that which is transcendental in the employment of the understanding." Note that in this negative sense, the "employment" of the understanding is "transcendental" both in the sense of being a priori and in the sense of being a necessary condition of experience. Construed positively, however, the phrase picks out an employment of the understanding that is transcendental or a priori (i.e., a transcendental application of the categories). Such an employment is not only not necessary for experience, it is, on Kant's view, dialectical.

of space and time (i.e., as appearances), the transcendental employment of the understanding, construed in the positive sense, may be understood to be one by means of which the categories are thought to be capable of directly referring to objects independently of the subjective conditions of space and time, and so not to objects given as appearances.

Here, the fact that the employment of the understanding is transcendental in the negative sense serves to ground the erroneous presumption that it is transcendental in the positive sense as well. "The categories are not, as regards their origin, grounded in sensibility, . . . and they seem, therefore, to allow of an application extending beyond all objects of the senses" (B306).[21]

This last quotation indicates that the transcendental employment of the understanding (in the positive sense) consists in the application of the categories "beyond" all objects of the senses. Kant offers an extended argument against any such application. This argument, as we shall see presently, centers on the claim that the transcendental application of the categories (and so the transcendental employment of the understanding in the positive sense) is not only improper but that it is in some sense impossible.

The Schematism chapter provides the basis for Kant's position. There, Kant argues that any real employment of the categories is necessarily restricted to the formal sensible conditions that make possible the application of concepts to objects in general (A140/B179). Kant's intent is to prohibit the application of the categories to any objects save those given under the conditions of sensibility. Indeed, in the Schematism chapter, the positive results of Kant's attempts to justify (ground) the subsumption of objects of experience (phenomena) under the categories are repeatedly held to entail the negative result that the pure concepts cannot be successfully employed except when restricted to the

21 Kant's point here may be formulated in terms of a conflation according to which we take (I) the fact that certain components of our knowledge are transcendental to entail (ii) that such transcendental components by themselves yield knowledge. More specifically, the fact that the categories, as transcendental concepts, carry within themselves an a priori reference to objects is erroneously taken here to entail that they may actually be applied to and determine objects independently of the conditions of sensibility that ground their use. Clearly, the movement from (I) to (ii) improperly exploits the transcendental "status" of the categories (i.e., the capacity of the pure concepts to refer a priori to objects). Hence, Kant argues that the dialectical employment of the pure understanding is a "groundless" attempt to discover and extend knowledge "merely by means of transcendental principles" (A64/B88).

subjective conditions of sensibility. In Kant's words, "it is evident that although the schemata of sensibility first realize the categories, they at the same time restrict them, that is, limit them to conditions which lie outside the understanding, and are due to sensibility" (A147/B186).

Kant's argument thus turns on the claim that, in the absence of any schemata, subsumption of any real object under the pure concepts of the understanding is impossible (cf. A248/B305). This argument, of course, follows from the general characterization of the "schemata" as necessary conditions under which the categories may be applied to and hence determine objects in general (cf. A140/B179). In abstraction from these schemata, Kant argues, "all conditions of any employment in judgments are lacking to them, namely the formal conditions of the subsumption of any ostensible object under these concepts" (A248/B305). From these last considerations, Kant concludes that the pure (unschematized) categories, if taken in abstraction from the conditions of sensibility, are nothing but formal modes of thinking possible objects and hence have no possible (real) employment (cf. A248/B305). Hence, in abstracting from these conditions, the transcendental employment of the understanding erroneously deploys the unschematized categories as principles of material knowledge.

In conjunction with this, Kant argues that the categories are employed "transcendentally" whenever they are used, by themselves alone, to "judge synthetically, to affirm and decide regarding objects in general" (A63/B88). Kant's point is apparently that these two entail one another, that to apply a concept transcendentally just is to take it to apply to an object in general, and vice versa. An example would presumably be the ontologist's attempt to acquire knowledge of substance "in general," after the manner of Descartes, Leibniz, or Spinoza. Kant's criticism is that such an attempt not only involves the use of formal categories as material principles, but also the erroneous attempt to judge about a pseudo-object. The problem, of course, is that by the time we get to the *Critique,* concepts of objects in general are not taken by Kant to yield (by themselves alone) knowledge of objects.

The claim that the "object in general" is not a knowable object follows straightforwardly from the fact that it is not an object actually given in any sensible intuition. Insofar as the concept of the object in general abstracts from the particular conditions under which objects may be given, the object is thought only in accordance with the general condition (requirement) that some sensible intuition be given, and not, further, in accordance with the mode in which, or the conditions under

which, it may be given. Hence, Kant's argument is essentially that in and of itself, the concept of the "object in general" does not refer to any real object, but is, rather, a "mode of thinking an object for possible intuitions" (A248/B303). At B305 Kant explicitly identifies the "employment of the understanding in respect of objects in general" with its employment in "respect of thought," claiming that through the pure categories alone no object at all can be thought:

> For if no intuition could be given corresponding to the concept [that of an object in general], the concept would still be a thought, so far as its form is concerned, but would be without any object, and no knowledge of anything would be possible by means of it. So far as I could know, there would be nothing, and could be nothing, to which my thought could be applied. (B147)

This view recurs throughout Kant's arguments and is given a variety of expressions. Generally, however, the point is that in abstraction from all sensibility, nothing that could be thought through the categories is given. This same general criticism is expressed somewhat differently in the A edition. There, Kant argues that the problem with the transcendental employment of the understanding is not that it abstracts from sensibility in general (the ostensible argument of the B edition), but that it abstracts simply from "our mode" of sensibility (space and time). In this context, Kant argues that when abstraction is made from the particular mode of our sensibility, the object thought through the pure categories is a "merely transcendental" one: "If the mode of this intuition is not in any way given, the object is merely transcendental, and the concept of the understanding has only transcendental employment, namely, as the unity of the thought of a manifold in general" (A247/B304).

These different formulations can be traced back to the Transcendental Deduction and reflect the different emphases, in the two edition versions, of the connection between the categories and intuition. Whereas in the B edition Kant articulates the necessary connection between the categories and intuition in terms of the concept of the object in general, in the A Deduction he does so in terms of the concept of the "transcendental object." Such an object, of course, is not considered to be an object in any real or empirical sense, but is understood rather as an indeterminate "something in general = x" which simply serves to express "the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition" (A250). The use of different locutions in the two editions reflects a cor-

responding difference in emphasis as regards the mutually entailed relation between thought and sensible intuition in general. The B edition's concept of the object in general emphasizes the role of the pure concepts as formal rule for synthesis of the manifold, whereas the A edition's concept of the transcendental object emphasizes the synthetic unity of the manifold according to these formal rules.[22] Insofar as each of these necessarily entails the other, however, the difference between the two editions marks no substantial change in doctrine. In the B Deduction, for example, Kant argues that the principle of the analytic unity of apperception had, as its correlate, the principle of the synthetic unity of apperception, a principle that "makes synthetic unity a condition of all thought" (B188–189). The analytic unity of apperception, in other words, corresponds to a "synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in general" (B140), and in the A edition Kant refers to this unity by the concept of the transcendental object.[23] As such, the transcendental object is similarly held to be the "correlate of the unity of apperception" (A250).

For this reason, Kant is careful to refer to the transcendental object itself as a nonempirical object (A109). Insofar as it does not "contain" any determinate intuition but only refers to "that unity which must be met with in any manifold of knowledge which stands in relation to an object," it does not present an object that is itself intuited by us (A109–110). In a related way, Kant sometimes speaks of the object in general as an "intelligible entity" that lacks any specific determination

22 Indeed, all of this reflects the well-known suggestion that the first edition of the *Critique* might have a stronger ontological commitment than the second edition.

23 That Kant distinguishes at all between the concept of the object in general (as the formal rules for synthesis of the manifold) and that of the transcendental object (as the synthetic unity of the manifold in general) is a function of the kind-distinction between the understanding and sensibility. Hence, although apperception and, with it, thought "precede all determinate ordering of representations" (B346), nevertheless "the manifold to be intuited must be given prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independently of it" (B145–146). See A109–110. At A110 Kant claims that this relation to an object is the necessary unity of consciousness and the synthesis of the manifold. The transcendental object, then, serves to account for the ability of thought (broadly speaking, the concept of the object in general) to refer to something given to it from elsewhere (i.e., from "outside" thought). Indeed, in this very general and abstract sense, it may be viewed as the referent of such thought. In this way, the concept of the transcendental object acts to "confer upon all our empirical concepts in general relation to an object, that is, objective reality" (A109–110). For an interesting discussion on these issues, see Henry E. Allison, "Kant's Concept of the Transcendental Object," *Kant-Studien* 2 (1968): 165–186.

(B307). The reference to the object in general as an intelligible entity reflects Kant's emphasis (in the B edition account of the object in general) on the conceptual conditions for something's being an object, and the concern to show that these conditions are different in kind and independent of any sensible conditions. Nevertheless, the object in general, (i.e., the correlate of the act of thinking or combining representations according to the rules expressed in the categories) yields a concept of a determinate object only in relation to some manifold of sensible intuition, which, when given, provides the understanding with the matter upon which to execute its function.

These considerations fuel Kant's rejection of ontology. As we have seen, Kant argues not simply that the correlative concepts of the object in general and the transcendental object represent objects in only an inadequate or indeterminate way, but moreover that, strictly speaking, they fail to represent "objects" at all. Instead, what are represented are the necessary conceptual conditions under which any sensible intuition becomes an object for thought.[24] Consequently, the concepts traditionally identified with a priori possibility of objects (and hence the discipline of ontology itself), are seen instead to express the a priori possibility of (i.e., the conditions of) our knowledge of objects. More specifically, in accordance with Kant's "transcendental turn," the discipline of ontology gets replaced by a transcendental epistemology. This transcendental turn in philosophy directly bears on Kant's criticism of any attempt to employ the categories transcendentally, as modes of direct knowledge of objects in general. Thus, Kant argues:

> The Transcendental Analytic leads to this important conclusion, that the most the understanding can achieve a priori is to anticipate the form of a possible experience in general. And since that which is not an appearance cannot be an object of experience, the understanding can never transcend those limits of sensibility within which alone objects can be given to us. Its principles are merely rules for the exposition of appearances; and the proud name of an Ontology that presumptuously claims to supply, in systematic and doctrinal form, synthetic a priori knowledge of things in general . . . must, therefore, give place to the modest title of a mere analytic of pure understanding. (A247/B304)

24 In line with this is Kant's claim that, apart from the formal conditions of sensibility, the pure categories have "only transcendental meaning" (cf. A248). Presumably, Kant means by this that they express conditions necessary for our knowledge of objects, where these are epistemological rather than ontological conditions.

With respect to this, Kant's general contention is that the attempt to acquire knowledge of objects in general entails erroneously taking the concepts that express the conceptual conditions that make possible our knowledge of objects to be principles through which objects themselves can be known. In this way, the pure concepts are held to be in themselves (independently of any sensible manifold) objectively valid. Kant takes himself to have shown, however, that the (objective) connection between the categories and objects must be mediated by sensibility and its a priori conditions.

We are now in a position to examine some of the errors that result from the attempt to judge transcendentally. In a way reminiscent of the *Dissertation,* Kant suggests that the transcendental employment of the understanding is to be construed as a fallacy or judgmental error that carries with it a "metaphysical" conflation of phenomena and noumena. In order to understand this claim, it is important to examine the distinction between phenomena and noumena as it appears in the *Critique.*

The Distinction between Appearances and Things in Themselves

In the section entitled Phenomena/Noumena, Kant argues that the object in general is, in the transcendental sense, an object considered in a way that abstracts from any difference between whether objects are given to us in intuition under the conditions of sensibility or whether they are so given merely under the conditions of thought. As we have seen, "objects in general" are not objects per se but are, rather, objects represented in abstraction from the sensible conditions under which intuitions are given. To abstract from these conditions is to abstract from any difference between representations of objects that are given in sensibility and representations of objects that are merely thought through the concepts of the pure understanding. Accordingly, the distinction between phenomena and noumena is most profitably seen as a distinction between two different sets of conditions under which objects are considered, or represented.[25] In this, I am clearly adopting the "methodological" interpretation of Kant's transcendental distinction.

25 Although they differ on the details, this interpretation is offered by Gerold Prauss, *Erscheinung bei Kant* (Berlin: de Gruyer, 1971) and *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974); Bernard Rousset, *La Doctrine kantienne de l'objectvité* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967); W. Werkmeister, *Kant: The Architechtonic and Devel-*

Given this, "phenomena" are objects represented in accordance with the conditions under which they must be given in intuition (sensibility), whereas "noumena" are objects represented in abstraction from sensibility, and hence simply in accordance with the conditions under which they must be thought. This accords with Kant's characterization of the faculties as providing distinct (i.e., different in kind) modes of access to objects, with sensibility providing the means by which objects are *given* and understanding providing those by which objects are *thought*. Hence, the transcendental distinction between phenomena and noumena provides the framework within which Kant will assess the attempts to apply the pure categories to objects under each of the two distinct sets of conditions (and so to either phenomena or noumena). Because the application of the categories to objects represented in accordance with the conditions of sensibility has already been deemed justifiable – indeed, it is necessary if thought is to have any objective validity – the focus of the discussion will be the legitimacy of any such application to objects represented solely under the conditions of thought, or to noumena. Kant is concerned to determine the legitimacy of the transcendental application of the categories. As Kant himself puts it, "The question, therefore, is whether in addition to the empirical employment of the understanding . . . there is likewise possible a transcendental employment, which has to do with the noumenon as an object" (A257/B313–A258/B314).

As we know, Kant denies any such employment. Indeed, because Kant has already shown the impossibility of the transcendental employment of the understanding, his arguments in the Phenomena/Noumena section are really designed to demonstrate how such employment results in the metaphysical conflation of phenomena and noumena. In the *Critique,* Kant identities this error as the conflation of appearances and "things in themselves."

The critical doctrine of the thing in itself is notoriously complicated, and I only outline some of the more relevant points here.[26] Note first that in the B edition Kant distinguishes between two senses of the noumenon: the positive and the negative. The former refers to intelligible objects directly accessible to the understanding alone.[27] This con-

opment of his Philosophy (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1980); G. Bird, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism.*

26 See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 237–254; Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 188–215.

27 As in the *Dissertation,* Kant characterizes the distinction between phenomena and noumena in terms of the different faculties to which they belong. As we have seen, Kant

ception of the noumenon is identified in the B edition of the *Critique* as the noumenon in the positive sense, that is, an object of a nonsensible intuition (B306–308). As in the *Dissertation,* in the *Critique* Kant explicitly denies that we have access to, and consequently knowledge of, any such noumenal object precisely because we lack any intellectual intuition. Consequently, he claims that the division of objects into phenomena and noumena is "quite inadmissible in the positive sense"; and in so doing, he clarifies the view of the *Dissertation* (cf. A256/B311).

At the same time that he rejects the admission of noumena in the positive sense, however, Kant suggests that the concept of "appearance" somehow "constrains" us to represent a noumenon. As in the *Dissertation,* then, Kant wants to argue that his doctrine of sensibility itself entails the transcendental distinction between phenomena and noumena: "The understanding, when it entitles an object in a certain relation mere phenomenon, at the same time forms, apart from that relation, a representation of an object in itself" (B307).

Accordingly, he argues that the transcendental concept of "appearance" (i.e., of an object considered in accordance with the way in which it is given to us in intuition) requires that we form some kind of concept of the noumenon. This last point is formulated in the text in a variety of ways. Overall, such formulations, whether considered individually or collectively, have failed to yield any substantial agreement among commentators as to how one should interpret the role in Kant's philosophy of the "thing in itself." Sometimes he is taken to argue that the constraint to form a representation of the thing in itself is imposed because we must recognize a causal ground of appearances (cf. *Critique* A250–252). This interpretation, however, has been extensively criticized on the grounds that, among other things, it commits Kant to an untenable doctrine of noumenal causality.

Be this as it may, it appears that Kant takes the thing in itself to be a way of thinking of some kind of "ground" of appearances, the representation or concept of appearances (see *Critique* A251–252), or the (critical) consideration of things as appearances. Although each of

claimed that "things which are thought sensitively are representations of things as they appear, but things which are intellectual are representations of things as they are" (2:393; 55). We also saw in the *Dissertation* that Kant argued that the intellect was capable of a "dogmatic" use, whereby intellectual concepts issue into some exemplar or archetype. In the *Critique* Kant warns against misconstruing this dogmatic use; the concepts of things in general do not yield any kind of direct intellectual access to a noumenal reality. See Chapter 2.

these suggestions would seem to be counterindicated by at least one passage, it is no doubt clear that in the preceding I have assumed a "methodological" interpretation of the constraint in accordance with which the thing in itself is thought. This position is very generally characterized by the claim that the representation of the thing as it is in itself is one that is methodologically entailed by the critical procedure of reflecting on objects in relation to our cognitive faculties and hence, in relation to "subjective conditions" under which objects can be given.[28] The concept represented as a result of this constraint is, according to Kant, that of the noumenon in the negative sense, and by this he means "a thing so far as it is not an object of sensible intuition" (B307–308). The problem is that, in abstracting from any consideration of whether objects are given in sensible intuition, we abstract from the necessary connection between appearances and sensibility. To consider that which appears in abstraction from its relation to sensibility, is to take it to be a "thing in itself": "The doctrine of sensibility is likewise the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, that is, of things which the understanding must think without this reference to our mode of intuition, therefore not merely as appearances but as things themselves" (B307–308).

Once the object is considered in abstraction from the conditions under which it actually appears, there is no genuine sense in which the object can be considered to be given to us. Indeed, a thing in itself, like a "thing in general," can only be considered a noumenon in the purely negative, or "problematic" sense of the term. So considered, it does not, of itself, present any concept of an "object" that could be known or determined through the categories. Indeed, in the absence of any such intuitively provided data, the representation of the thing in itself is nothing more than the "entirely indeterminate concept of an intelligible entity" (B307), which is equivalent to the concept of an "object in general."

On this score, it may be noted that the thing in itself, like the object in general, is for the most part to be understood in terms of the activity of thinking objects. One way of explaining this claim would be to say that the phrase "in itself" (or "in themselves") is an adverbial determi-

28 Allison argues for this position in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism.* See also Rousset's discussion of the thing in itself, *La Doctrine kantienne de l'objectivité,* esp. chap. 6. Rousset argues that Kant is committed to both an epistemological and an ontological use of this term.

nation referring to a certain kind of philosophical thinking.[29] The phrase "things in themselves," then, as it relates to the critical distinction, should be understood as shorthand for the phrase "things when they are considered in themselves by reason" (A28/B44). It follows from this that, critically understood, "things in themselves" are not objects at all but certain ways of considering objects: "Appearance has two sides: one by which the object is viewed in itself, without regard to the mode of intuiting it, the other when the form of the intuition of this object is taken into consideration" (A38/B55).

Despite the fact that the thought of the thing in itself is ultimately seen to consist in nothing more than the formal activity of thinking objects in general, there are a number of very important ways in which the concept of the thing in itself might be distinguished from the concept of the thing in general (and its correlate, the transcendental object). Most important, the thing in itself has to do with the specific consideration of empirical objects in abstraction from the conditions under which they appear. Hence, whereas the thought of the object in general is the thought of some object of sensible intuition, taken in abstraction from the mode of intuition, the thought of the thing in itself is precisely the thought of an object of our sensibility (a spatiotemporal object) as it is, independently of the mode of the sensible intuition in which it is given. Moreover, although the thought of the thing in itself must be recognized as an instance of that merely formal activity of thinking of (i.e., referring to) objects that is characterized by the concept of the object in general, it carries with it a purported reference not (like the latter concept) to objects that must be given simply from outside thought (i.e., in sensible intuition in general) but rather to objects that must be given outside sensibility altogether. Thus, although the concept of the object in general has a legitimate use by which it acquires true objective reference in experience (i.e., when it is employed empirically), the concept of the thing in itself never has any true objective reference to an object.

It is precisely this feature – that of reference to "objects" outside sensibility – that identifies the consideration of the thing in itself and distinguishes it from the thought of the object in general. Additionally, this feature, I suggest, makes the attempt to know things "in themselves" so objectionable. Yet, according to Kant, the transcendental employment

29 This is Werkmeister's formulation of the methodological interpretation; see *Kant: The Architechtonic and Development of His Philosophy,* pp. 74–75.

of the categories (i.e., their application to objects in general) somehow involves their application to "things in themselves." Hence, of the categories of the understanding he argues:

> For if we remove all those conditions . . . which mark them out as concepts of possible empirical employment, and view them as concepts of things in general and therefore of transcendental employment, all that we can do with them is to regard the logical function in judgments . . . as the condition of the possibility of the things themselves. (A242)

How are we to understand the claim that viewing objects as things in general entails taking the logical function in judgments to be the condition of the possibility of things themselves? Perhaps, it is best taken in conjunction with Kant's contention that logical possibility (conceivability) does not ground real possibility. Real possibility, according to Kant, depends on a real ground, the principle of which is expressed in the principle of causality, whereas logical possibility (conceivability) requires only that there be noncontradiction. For Kant, the categories express conditions under which objects can be thought. If the categories are instead held to be conditions of the (real) possibility of things, regardless of the particular mode in which such things are given, then, it is assumed that conclusions can be generated regarding objects through deducing consequences simply from formal concepts or principles. Anticipating the upcoming argument of the Dialectic, Kant even insists that the attempt to employ the concepts of the understanding transcendentally is based on a deception (*Täuschung;* B306). Although we will not consider this view until the next chapter, it is fairly clear that the problem concerns mistaking the conditions of thought for the conditions of things. Similar claims appear scattered throughout the text: for example, in the Schematism chapter Kant argues that the pure concepts are employed transcendentally if viewed as "conditions of the possibility of things in general." Viewing the categories in this way, Kant argues, entails assuming that they can be extended to objects in themselves without restriction to our sensibility (A139/B178).

This claim seems to make sense of the "official" definition of the transcendental employment of the understanding offered at A239/B298, where Kant defines the "transcendental employment of a concept in any principle" as its "application" both "to things in general and in themselves." Although it is not immediately clear whether Kant wants an overall distinction-in-kind to prevail between the application of a concept to

"things in general" and its application to "things in themselves," it is at the very least certain that Kant is criticizing the attempt to pass judgment on objects without first determining in each case what kinds of object (phenomenon or noumenon) are under consideration.[30] To apply the pure concepts to an object in general is of course precisely to apply them in a way that abstracts from any such differences. Thus, the presumption that categories are applicable to objects in general (objects of any sensible intuition, regardless of the particular conditions of sensibility) entails that they are thereby applicable not only to empirical objects (objects given under the particular conditions of our sensibility) but also, and at the same time, to such objects considered independently of these particular conditions (and vice-versa).[31]

Such an assumption is tantamount to the view that objects as they exist in themselves are given in thought. The transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves, then, is supposed to account for the necessity of thinking such objects "in themselves" while demonstrating the error of taking the thing in itself to be itself an object of possible knowledge. The necessity of thinking the thing in itself is, of course, carried directly over from the *Dissertation*'s "elenctic" use of intellectual concepts (see Chapter 2). As in the *Dissertation,* Kant argues that the thing in itself has the merely negative (although indispensably necessary) function of "preventing sensible intuition from being extended to things in themselves, and thus serves to limit the objective validity of sensible knowledge" (A255/B311). The critical or

30 This certainly scores with the previously cited passage at B88, where Kant rejects the attempt to make judgments about objects without first determining whether something is an object of sense or an object of understanding.

31 Perhaps because of this, the dialectical employment of the understanding is frequently understood in the secondary literature simply in terms of its application to "things in themselves," where it appears to assume that such an application is indistinguishable from (or perhaps itself an instance of) its application to "things in general." H. S. Paton, for example, explicitly identifies the two senses of transcendental employment, suggesting that to apply a concept or principle to things in general is to apply it just to things in themselves. See *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience,* vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 422. Although this position is certainly representative of Kant's views with respect to the transcendental application of the understanding, I still think that it is possible to argue for a distinction between this and the transcendent application of the understanding on somewhat different grounds, grounds that nevertheless demonstrate a difference between applying the categories to things in themselves indirectly (transcendental application) and applying them to things in themselves directly. Such a distinction may involve two separate kinds of things in themselves, but I've yet to work this through completely.

negative sense of the noumenon, then, plays a crucial role in what would seem to be a new and distinct emphasis on limiting the use of *sensibility*. Consider the following:

> The concept of a noumenon is thus a merely *limiting concept*, the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility; and it is therefore only of negative employment. At the same time it is no arbitrary invention; it is bound up with the limitation of sensibility, though it cannot affirm anything positive beyond the field of sensibility. (A255/B311)

This new concern to limit sensibility dominates the Phenomena/Noumena chapter, where Kant for the most part stops criticizing the "transcendental use," and hence the extension of, the pure *understanding*, and instead criticizes the application of spatiotemporal predicates beyond the subjective conditions of sense. Moreover, the suggestion seems to be that the understanding avoids error by placing and enforcing limits on the proper use of *sensibility* (cf. A288/B345).

To be sure, Kant does argue against the position that the understanding can be thought to have a legitimate transcendental use simply because it is not itself grounded in and restricted to the sensible conditions of space and time:

> Understanding accordingly limits sensibility, but does not thereby extend its own sphere. In the process of warning the latter that it must not presume to claim applicability to things in themselves but only to appearances, it does indeed think for itself an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearances and therefore not itself appearance. (A288/B345)

This passage clearly suggests that Kant wants to prevent both the transcendental employment of the pure concepts and principles of the understanding *and* the erroneous extension of the conditions of sensibility. Nevertheless, the addition of this last claim in the Phenomena/Noumena chapter most certainly suggests an account of judgmental error that goes considerably beyond the mere attempt to employ categories that issue solely from the understanding transcendentally. Indeed, Kant's position seems to be that the transcendental use of the concepts of the understanding coincides with a host of distinct conceptual misapplications. Insofar as the transcendental employment of concepts abstracts from any consideration of the specific conditions under which "faculty specific" concepts can be applied, judgment be-

comes a "free for all," where both sensible and intellectual concepts and principles are used without distinction. The discussion of these different errors is extended over the next three chapters. Before proceeding, however, some further specification of the different judgmental errors implicit in Kant's account is in order.

The Pretensions of Sensibility

Up to this point, we have considered the problem of the transcendental employment of the understanding to be one that essentially concerns the illegitimate extension of the pure *understanding* (the categories) beyond all objects of the sense. Indeed, throughout the Analytic (and specifically in the Transcendental Deduction and the Schematism chapter), Kant would seem to be most explicitly concerned to limit the employment of the pure concepts to the conditions of sensibility. There we saw that the transcendental employment of the understanding was defined as the attempt to know (apply categories to) objects in general. Such an attempt, as we have seen, erroneously presupposed that the pure concepts and principles of transcendental logic could be indiscriminately applied to both empirical objects (phenomena) and intelligible objects (noumena). Yet it is important at this point to note that implicit in Kant's account are actually criticisms of a number of apparently distinct kinds of judgmental error. As we already saw in my preliminary remarks in Part I, Kant also criticizes the related (although presumably distinct) attempt to acquire knowledge of things in general from both the formal concepts of reflection (e.g., identity) and the formal principles of *general* logic (e.g., the principle of contradiction). According to Kant, Leibniz was guilty of just such an error, for Leibniz

> believed that he could obtain knowledge of the inner nature of things by comparing all objects merely with the understanding and with the separated, formal concepts of its thought. . . . He compared all things with each other by means of concepts alone, and naturally found no other differences save those only through which the understanding distinguishes its pure concepts from one another. The conditions of sensible intuition, which carry with them their own differences, he did not regard as original, sensibility being for him only a confused mode of representation, and not a separate source of representations. (A270/B326–A271/B327)

The problem, according to Kant, is represented in Leibniz's attempt to determine the relations that hold between objects of experience solely

through a logical comparison of the concepts of these objects. But, according to Kant, "whether things are identical or different, in agreement or opposition, etc., cannot be established at once by mere comparison, but solely by means of transcendental consideration, through the distinction of the cognitive faculty to which they belong" (A262/B318). Obviously such error generally arises from Leibniz's failure to recognize the "kind-distinction" between the sensible and intellectual faculties. Such a failure led Kant to claim that Leibniz "intellectualized all appearances" (cf. A271/B327). Kant argues that Leibniz's "intellectualization" of appearances is grounded in the failure to recognize that the subjective conditions of sensibility are at the same time conditions to which thought must be limited if it is to have any objective reference.

Kant's specific criticisms turn on Leibniz's assumption that objects are represented in determinate fashion simply through the concept of the object in general. The subsequent error is twofold. On the one hand, Leibniz is guilty of conflating logical and material principles. In the absence of any intuitive content, the pure concepts of the understanding yield no material conclusions. On the other hand, Leibniz is guilty of conflating logical with real objects, for in attempting to conclude from these principles as to the nature of existing things, Leibniz takes the object in general (i.e., a merely conceptual or transcendental object) to represent by itself real (spatiotemporal) objects.

The attempt to acquire knowledge of things in general through the principles of general logic naturally carries with it the problem of confusing phenomena and noumena. Once again, the Leibnizian doctrines are taken to be examples of such a mistake; for Leibniz is said to take concepts of empirical (spatiotemporal) objects and subject them to principles that only hold if the objects are considered independently of the conditions of sensibility. Such a procedure, as we have seen, is tantamount to considering appearances as things in themselves.

What is relevant for our purposes is the fact that both these "misemployments" of thought are *judgmental errors* that occur through the unrestricted use of the concepts and principles of the *understanding*. What is most striking in these accounts is the fact that Kant seems to downplay (or perhaps to reverse) the primary components of the theory of "illusion" which was offered in the *Dissertation*. That theory centered on the need to keep "things conceived sensitively away from" intellectually thought objects. Kant's view was clearly that sensuality "contaminates" the otherwise metaphysically viable knowledge of the intellect. Prior to

the Phenomena/Noumena chapter, however, Kant's emphasis in the *Critique* is certainly not on the attempt to apply *sensible* concepts and principles to *"intellectually thought" objects*. Because of this, it may be thought that the early portions of the Analytic represent a return to the earlier "empiricist" positions articulated in the *Beweisgrund* and the *Dreams*.

Although Kant seems most explicitly concerned to limit the employment of the pure concepts to the conditions of sensibility, however, preventing the extension of "sensible" conditions to things in general and things in themselves is of at least equal importance for his arguments. As we have just seen, Kant did not abandon the *Dissertation*'s view that sensibility needs to be curbed. In fact, a set of *Reflexionen* from the period between the *Dissertation* and the *Critique* indicates that Kant was occupied with the possibility of a "Dialectic" of *both* sensibility *and* understanding.[32] In *Reflexion* 4757, for example, Kant outlines the dialectic in terms of two problems: the error of extending sensible conditions beyond their proper domain, and the infection of reason by empirical conditions (17:703–705). The presence of these two different accounts in the *Critique* can certainly be traced back to a precritical ambivalence as regards the "dialectics" of sensibility and understanding. Such ambivalence is apparent in Kant's earlier noted shift from the empiricist position of the *Dreams* (where error issues from the pretensions of reason) to the *Dissertation* (where it issues from the pretensions of sense).

That Kant was not more explicit about the relation between these two apparently distinct accounts is undeniably unfortunate. Even so, rather than operating at odds with one another, it seems clear that Kant's concern is to incorporate the positions of *both* the *Dreams* and the *Dissertation* into the *Critique*. Thus, even in the Analytic, the problem of limiting the employment of the categories would appear to coincide with that of "curbing the pretensions of sensibility" (see, e.g., B346). Indeed, it should be clear both that the *Critique* is in many ways the synthesis of these earlier two works, and that Kant is committed to both of these accounts of judgmental error in virtue of his own procedure of transcendental reflection. Such a procedure is based on the consideration of the activities of thought in artificial abstraction from the ad-

32 See esp. *R* 4756, *R* 4757 (17:699–705). Robert Theis discusses this issue in his "De l'illusion transcendentale," *Kant-Studien* 76 (1985): 125–131.

mixture of conditions that collectively ground their real use. Given Kant's "kind-distinction" between sensibility and understanding, he is committed to specifying the domain for the proper use of the concepts and principles of each faculty.

Kant takes the application of spatiotemporal predicates beyond the "limits" of sensibility, or the subjection of pure concepts to the conditions of space and time, to be equally problematic. Indeed, Kant criticizes not only the Leibnizian "intellectualization of appearances" but also what he refers to as Locke's "sensualization" of the concepts of the understanding. In accordance with the latter, Locke presumably takes the conditions of our intuition (space and time) to be universally applicable to everything whatsoever that is possible, arguing that pure concepts are merely less distinct (or more abstract) representations of existing things. According to Kant, both the Leibnizian and Lockean procedures entail a transcendental misemployment of thought according to which appearances are taken for things in themselves:

> Instead of seeking in understanding and sensibility two sources of representations which, while quite different, can supply objectively valid judgments of things only in conjunction with each other, each of these great men holds to only one of the two, viewing it as in immediate relation to things in themselves. The other faculty is then regarded as serving only to confuse or to order the representations which this selected faculty yields. (A271/B327)

The problems related to this project becomes particularly clear when we consider Kant's account of reason and the associated doctrine of transcendental illusion (see Chapters 4 and 8). The addition of a third distinct activity of thought and its unique concepts significantly increases the number of errors Kant wishes to catalog and critique. For the present, however, it should be noted that, in relation to the understanding-sensibility issue, there are, on Kant's account, two "directions" in which thought can be misapplied. First, formal (either general logical or transcendental) principles can be applied to possible "objects" of sensible intuition (either objects in general or appearances) independently of the conditions of sensibility, thus erroneously subjecting sensible (or specifically spatiotemporal) objects to formal principles that properly hold only for objects in general. Second, *spatiotemporal* conditions or predicates (or concepts of space and time) can be applied to things in general or things in themselves, thus erroneously subject-

ing intellectual concepts to sensible principles that hold only for objects of sensibility (cf. A57/B81). Thus, Kant takes the transcendental employment of spatiotemporal predicates to be just as problematic as the transcendental use of pure intellectual concepts. Indeed, of the pure concepts of the understanding, Kant claims that "they arouse suspicion not merely in regard to the objective validity and the limits of their own employment, but owing to their tendency to employ the concept of space beyond the conditions of sensible intuition, that concept they also render ambiguous" (A88/B121).

Kant's point seems to be that because of the failure to recognize the kind-distinction between sensible and intellectual conditions, the transcendental use of the understanding inadvertently (and perhaps unavoidably) falls victim to applying sensible (spatiotemporal) predicates as if they were universal conditions of objects in general. This account of the transcendental employment of concepts is thus the critical analogue to the theory of subreption in the *Dissertation*.

In the *Critique,* Kant ultimately links the error exhibited by both Locke and Leibniz (that of taking appearances for things in themselves) up to the position he refers to as "transcendental realism." Although Kant's explicit references to "transcendental realism" are scanty, it does seem clear that he wishes to characterize it as an erroneous position that takes the subjective conditions of space and time, and therefore also spatiotemporal *objects* (appearances), to be given "in themselves," independently of our sensibility (A396; A490/B518–A491/B519). This characterization suggests that, for Kant, transcendental realism is specifically grounded in the tendency to extend the conditions and principles belonging to *sensibility* beyond their legitimate domain, a view reminiscent of the earlier *Dissertation*. Nevertheless, as we have seen, this tendency to extend the "conditions" of sensibility, or to take appearances to be objects given in themselves, is manifested in judgmental errors, and therefore involves the transcendental employment of the understanding. Thus, Kant also charges that Leibniz takes appearances for things in themselves in his (Leibniz's) efforts to acquire material knowledge about appearances simply from the pure concepts of the understanding. Moreover, Kant suggests that the tendency to apply the "concept of space" to objects that are not given to us in experience (i.e., to objects in general) is a result of a transcendental employment of the understanding. Because of this, "transcendental realism" may be understood to include all those philosophical positions which, from a Kantian perspective, systematically conflate "ap-

pearances and things in themselves."[33] As we have seen, a great deal of attention in the Analytic is devoted to undermining this conflation of appearances and things in themselves (and the judgmental error of "transcendentally" applying the pure concepts of the understanding). Given this, it seems that the materials for a critique of transcendental realism are well in place in the Analytic, long before Kant officially introduces either the doctrine of transcendental illusion, or his theory of reason and its ideas.

My ultimate aim is to determine how these arguments against the transcendental employment of the understanding, the conflation of appearances and things in themselves, and "transcendental realism" cooperate with the account of metaphysical illusion in the context of Kant's overall argument. Obviously, such concerns cannot be addressed completely until the next chapter; nevertheless, the arguments offered in the Analytic do offer some insight into Kant's subsequent critique of transcendent metaphysics. Kant takes his critique of the transcendental application of concepts to provide grounds for rejecting general metaphysics (ontology). As such, the criticisms in the Analytic would seem to secure the foundation for Kant's subsequent arguments in the Dialectic against those disciplines traditionally associated with "special" metaphysics, to wit, rational psychology, cosmology, and theology. That is, insofar as the doctrines associated with these last disciplines can be shown in any way to depend upon the attempt to employ the understanding transcendentally, the Analytic may reasonably be taken to yield a criticism of the judgmental errors involved in these doctrines as well. We can expect that the criticism of the fallacies or judgmental errors involved in the arguments of special metaphysics, then, will turn on Kant's related rejection of the position of transcendental realism. But given that Kant distinguishes the arguments and goals of special metaphysics from those of general metaphysics, or ontology, we can also expect that the Dialectic will be devoted to identifying a particular and distinct kind of problem.

I hope to show that the distinctive feature of the "dialectical inferences" of special metaphysics is that they involve the transcendental ap-

33 For a discussion of the position referred to as "transcendental realism," see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 14–34. I am indebted to Allison's account of transcendental realism, although I differ from Allison's early treatment of this topic insofar as I distinguish between the position referred to as "transcendental realism" and the doctrine of transcendental illusion.

plication of the understanding specifically in accordance with *ideas* of *reason*. What distinguishes the disciplines of special metaphysics, then, is the fact that they are grounded in a rational demand to go beyond all possible objects of experience and to posit a metaphysical object at the ground of appearances. These misapplications of thought are more specifically "transcendent" in procedure, and, in accordance with them, certain transcendental principles issue dogmatically into exemplars or archetypes in an illusory fashion. It is precisely this feature, I shall argue, that distinguishes the transcendental and the transcendent employments of concepts. Before moving onto this topic, however, we must consider Kant's claim that such dialectical inferences are rooted in a "transcendental illusion."

4

TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION

In the preceding chapter we saw that Kant's rejection of ontology centers on criticisms of the attempt to acquire knowledge of objects in general simply from the formal (transcendental) concepts and principles of the understanding. Once again, his criticisms are directed toward undermining any transcendental employment of the understanding (in the positive sense). But Kant also takes the transcendental use of the understanding to involve a conflation of appearances and things in themselves, a conflation that carries with it a tendency to apply sensitive conditions beyond the limits of sensibility. In this chapter, our concern is with Kant's subsequent attempt (in the Dialectic) to argue for a unique kind of error referred to as transcendental illusion. In this connection, I argue that the doctrine of transcendental illusion is to be distinguished from the account of the transcendental employment of the understanding. Moreover, because the transcendental employment of the understanding, as well as the conflation of appearances and things in themselves, is what characterizes "transcendental realism," I further contend that the doctrine of illusion is to be distinguished from the adoption of any transcendentally realistic position. Because of this, Kant's efforts to undermine transcendental realism do not lead to any straightforward rejection of the doctrine of transcendental illusion. More specifically, I contend that even if we were to "rid ourselves" of transcendental realism, we would still, on Kant's view, be subject to transcendental illusion. I therefore suggest that this distinction provides us with a response to those objections brought against Kant's inevitability thesis discussed in the Introduction to this work.

Portions of this chapter appear, together with material from Chapter 8, in "Kant on the Illusion of a Systematic Unity of Nature," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1997): 1–28.

The chapter is divided into three parts, focusing on Kant's discussion of the sources of dialectical error and some of the problems associated with it, his "doctrine" of transcendental illusion, and his discussion of the "system" of the transcendental ideas.

The Sources of Dialectical Error

In the Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant suggests that he is concerned to explicate a *particular kind* of error, one that is apparently distinct from the erroneous (i.e., transcendental) application of the categories discussed in the previous chapter.[1] Kant refers to this "new" error as "transcendental illusion" (cf. A294/B350–A298/B355). His characterization of this unique dialectical error, however, suffers from a number of ambiguities. One major problem is that he offers what seem to be two very different, and possibly incompatible, accounts of the source of such illusion. According to the first, error is generated solely by some kind of problematic interaction of sensibility and understanding. The account itself is confusing. More confusing is the fact that, shortly after offering it, Kant introduces a variety of formulations of the problem, each of which makes it clear that he takes transcendental illusion to have its source in the "third" and unique activity of thought that he calls "reason." In what follows, I consider each of these accounts in turn. When properly understood, the two accounts are not only compatible, but, indeed, each is essential to the position of the Dialectic.

The First Account: Sensibility as the Source of Error. The Dialectic begins by offering a very general account of error. Kant argues first that truth and/or error are attributed to proposed knowledge claims on the basis of whether such knowledge "agrees with" its object (A294/B350). Thus Kant suggests that error (like truth) is a property only of "judgments." On these same grounds he argues that illusion, as a *ground* for error, is only to be found in the relation of the object to our understanding (A294/B350). When Kant locates truth and error in the relation of "the object" to our understanding, or in "judgment," he should not necessarily be understood to be talking about a relation between a specific proposition and any particular object or state of affairs. Kant frequently identifies the understanding with the general and formal activity of

1 See A296/B352. The distinction between transcendental illusion and the transcendental misapplication of the categories is discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 8.

judging (cf. A69/B94). Similarly, sensibility is itself understood as "the object" on which the formal activities of the understanding are exercised.[2] Accordingly, Kant's transcendental philosophy moves from maintaining simply a strict correspondence theory of truth, and also maintains that truth is epistemologically defined as a relation between the faculties. More specifically, the relation between the object and our knowledge is not to be construed as an ontological relation between a particular thing (or state of affairs) and the mind, but rather, as for Locke, as an epistemological relation between cognitive faculties and their representations.

At least so far, then, Kant seems to be concerned with the very same set of issues that dominated both the *Dreams* and the *Dissertation*. In each of these works, Kant focuses on the need to trace the connection that holds between our representations and the faculties to which they belong. Only those representations whose legitimacy is properly understood in connection with the faculties to which they belong are free from delusion. This project was similarly carried out in the Analytic to the first *Critique,* where Kant argued at length against both the transcendental employment of the pure understanding and the conflation of appearances and things in themselves. In keeping with this argument, Kant now suggests in the Dialectic that all error must be understood to result from some kind of problematic "interaction" between the two faculties of knowledge, sensibility and understanding.

> No natural force can of itself deviate from its own laws. Thus neither the understanding by itself (uninfluenced by another cause), nor the senses by themselves, would fall into error. . . . Since we have no source of knowledge besides these two, it follows that error is brought about solely by the unobserved influence of sensibility on the understanding. (A295/B351)

Although Kant certainly claims that neither of the faculties is *by itself* responsible for error, he clearly takes sensibility to be the primary "ground" of all error. The suggestion that sensibility provides the ground for error is explicitly found in the *Critique* (B351n), and it is confirmed throughout the *Lectures on Logic*.[3] Presumably, this claim is

2 This was seen in the discussion of the deduction offered in Chapter 2. See also B351n.

3 See Kant's *Lectures on Logic,* trans. J. Michael Young, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Kant's contention that sensibility provides the "ground" of all error is confirmed throughout these *Lectures.* See *Blomberg Logic,* 24:104; 80; *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic,* 24:721; 457; *Vienna Logic,*

based on Kant's contention that, in the absence of any external interference, the understanding is constrained to act solely in accordance with its own general laws. This view was certainly not explicit in Kant's earlier discussions of the transcendental employment of the understanding. In the Analytic, recall, Kant argued that the understanding is drawn toward a transcendental application of concepts precisely because it is not limited to the conditions of sensibility, and that it seems therefore to be entitled to what Kant had called a "transcendental" use. Kant suggested, moreover, that the transcendental employment of the understanding might be responsible for the erroneous "extension" of the concept of space to things in general and in themselves. However, he now seems to argue that the transcendental employment of concepts is itself caused by (or at least grounded in) some subterranean "influence" of sensibility on the understanding: "Sensibility, when subordinated to the understanding, as the object upon which the latter exercises its function, is the source of real modes of knowledge. But the same sensibility, insofar as it influences the operations of the understanding, and determines it to make judgments, is the ground of error" (B351n).

According to Kant, such error comes about when the unobserved influence of sensibility causes the "subjective grounds of judgment" (*die subjektiven Gründe des Urteils*) to enter into union with the "objective grounds" of judgment (A295/B351). The result is that the objective grounds of judgment "deviate" from their own true function (A295/B351). We are thus left with what Butts has referred to as the "geometry" of illusion.[4] To be sure, Kant's account of error here seems to be, broadly speaking, quite "mechanical." In fact, in a vaguely Humean fashion, he seems to be appealing to something like Newton's First Law to account for the altered movement of judgment, which occurs as a result of the interaction of the "forces" of sensibility and understanding.[5] In this sense, Kant's account is highly reminiscent of the *Dreams,* where he argues that the supposedly a priori reasonings of the philosopher are imperceptibly influenced by the weight of experiences.

24:824–826; 282; *Jasche Logic,* 9:54; 561; all in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.*

4 Robert Butts, "Kant's Dialectic and the Logic of Illusion" in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind,* ed. Patricia Easton, North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy, vol. 5 (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview, 1997): 307–317, esp. p. 309.

5 Similar suggestions can be found in Kant's *Lectures on Logic.* See Young, *Lectures on Logic,* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant,* e.g., pp. 824–825.

More specifically, Kant suggests that the latter cause our reasonings to "swerve" in directions they would not otherwise in order to account for empirical facts and testimonies (cf. *Dreams* 2:359). Claims of this sort certainly suggest that Kant takes error to come about as a result of some kind of cognitive "mis-fire," and indeed, Butts has suggested that dialectical illusions are to be understood as neurological events which bespeak disease.[6]

There are a number of problems with Kant's suggestion that the source of all error can be found in the "unobserved influence" of sensibility on the understanding. Although Kant claims that error results from the interference of the subjective with the objective "grounds of judgment," it is not clear exactly what he means by these terms, or how it is that the adverse influence of sensibility generates such an error.[7] It is worth noting, however, that Kant's position here is also similar to one of the earlier accounts of judgmental error familiar to us from both the preceding chapter and the *Inaugural Dissertation*.[8] More specifically, in the Introduction to the Dialectic, Kant seems to be appealing to the earlier discussed need to curb the pretensions of sensibility. As we have seen, Kant argued in the *Dissertation* that the deceptive nature of the subreptic fallacies issued from the fact that we fallaciously "subject all things which are possible to the sensitive axioms of space and time" (cf. 2:424; 83). The problem is that space and time are conditions simply of (human) sensitive cognition and cannot be taken as conditions of the possibility of things in general. Hence, to use space and time in judgments that are about things in themselves is to take these subjective conditions to be objective.

This point perhaps becomes clearer by an example not previously discussed from the *Inaugural Dissertation*. Consider Kant's criticism of the principle that *"Everything impossible simultaneously is and is not"* (2:416–417; 87–88).[9] According to Kant, the fallacious principle arises from our erroneously "treating the subjective conditions of judging as

6 Butts, "Kant's Dialectic and the Logic of Illusion," pp. 14–15.

7 Much of the problem stems from Kant's use of analogy, i.e., his tendency to characterize judgmental error in what we may refer to as "Newtonian terms" (cf. A294/B350, where Kant basically appeals to Newton's First Law and suggests that the "faculties" are to be viewed as "natural forces"). I take it that the entire project of transcendental reflection is in part motivated by and certainly permeated with this view.

8 *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis* (2:385–420). For a discussion of this text, see Chapter 2.

9 *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis* (2:415–417; 85–88).

objective" (2:416–417; 88). More specifically, he argues that the principle involves taking space and time (the subjective conditions) to hold objectively, of everything that exists. Kant's claim is that because the principle predicates a sensitive cognition, the legitimate application of the principle is limited to things that are possible sensitive cognitions. In Kant's words, it is "valid" only according to subjective laws. Hence, for Kant, sensuality and the sensitive axioms are only capable of subjectively grounding judgments, that is, providing the basis for judgments about objects only qua considered under the restricted conditions of our own intuitive representation (appearances).

In the *Dissertation* Kant was also committed to the view that the intellect provides the "objective conditions" of judgment. By this he meant that objects themselves (independently of the conditions of sensitive intuition) are subject to the concepts and principles of the intellect. Such a position was grounded in Kant's characterization of the intellect as providing representations of things *as they are* (2:393; 55). Any judgment that predicates an *intellectual* concept of the subject was taken by Kant to hold generally and objectively, that is, to apply to any and all such objects themselves represented in the concept of the subject.[10]

Kant's view on the forms of human *sensibility* is essentially the same in the *Critique* as it was in the *Dissertation*. Indeed, it is precisely this that motivates Kant's attempt in the Phenomena/Noumena chapter to limit the use of sensibility. Space and time hold only of objects considered as given under the subjective conditions of our human sensibility; they do not hold of objects considered independently of these conditions (i.e., of objects in general or things in themselves). As in the *Dissertation,* then, sensibility may be said to provide the "subjective conditions" of judgment in the sense that sensible predicates can only be used in judgments that are about appearances.

Despite these similarities, Kant's use of other terms is considerably more confusing in the *Critique*. This is especially so in connection with his characterization of the "intellectual conditions" of human knowledge.[11] Part of the problem would seem to follow from the fact that

10 On this score, note that the intellectually thought predicate of any judgment states the necessary condition under which the subject is cognizable (thinkable). In the *Dissertation* the predicate is objective precisely because the laws of intellectual cognition (once carefully distinguished from those laws which provide criteria for intuitive or sensitive cognition) provide at the same time the criteria for real possibility. See Chapter 2.

11 Henry E. Allison has persuasively argued that Kant's transcendental idealism is best understood in conjunction with the claim that there are a priori ("epistemic") conditions

Kant's earlier theory of the intellect undergoes some rather significant changes by the time it reaches the *Critique.* In the *Critique,* Kant argues that the understanding (intellect), like sensibility, contributes to the knowledge of things only as they *appear.* Consequently, the pure categories do not by themselves provide any knowledge of reality, which means that the understanding, unlike the *Dissertation*'s intellect, cannot be said to provide the "objective conditions" of judgment insofar as it represents things as they *are* (in themselves).[12] In fact, in the *Critique,* Kant frequently refers to the laws, principles, rules, or concepts of the pure understanding as "subjective."[13] Here, the term "subjective" refers to the status of the categories as expressing those conditions necessary for conceivability, or for the possibility of some conceptual act.[14] As we saw in the preceding chapter, they are the necessary conditions under which things can be *thought.* Such conditions are to be distinguished from those conditions that ground the real possibility of things (cf. A244/B302).[15]

Yet it is quite clear that, in the *Critique,* the categories are not merely supposed to be (subjective) conditions of *thought* but the a priori conditions of possible experience (and hence "objects") as well. Indeed, the aim of the Deduction is precisely to demonstrate their role as providing the necessary conditions for the sensible experience of objects (cf. B127). To the extent that they do *this,* the categories yield "the objective ground of the possibility of experience" (B127); they "objectively ground" or "condition" knowledge (see also A96). Hence, the frequent and varied claims that these conditions are "objective," or "objectively valid," emphasize the fact that the laws of the understanding provide conditions that make possible the experience or knowledge

of human knowledge. In accordance with such a claim, the faculties (e.g., sensibility and the understanding) are characterized as expressing the sensible and intellectual conditions of human knowledge, respectively. I am obviously indebted to Allison on these matters. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), esp. chaps. 5 and 6.

12 Such a position entails that the criteria for conceivability be sharply distinguished from the criteria for real possibility. Accordingly, whereas Kant, in the *Dissertation,* appears to identify the one with the other, in the *Critique* he explicitly argues against such an identification; cf. A244/B302. See also B303n.

13 See, e.g., A287/B344, where the categories are referred to as "subjective forms of the unity of the understanding."

14 As with the *Dissertation*'s intellectual cognitions, they are predicated in judgments as conditions without which the subject is not *thinkable.*

15 In this sense, Kant's position in the *Critique* may be seen to be similar to that which was earlier offered in the *Träume;* see Chapter 1.

of appearances. For this reason, the concepts of the understanding may also be said to provide the "objective conditions" of judgment insofar as they are the necessary (conceptual) conditions under which something given in (any) intuition becomes an "object" for thought.[16]

Unfortunately, this does not bring the matter to a close, for the "ground" of these objectively valid subjective conditions is itself sometimes characterized as a "subjective ground," where this may generally be understood in the same way that the intellectual cognitions of the *Dissertation* were understood to have a subjective ground, to wit, as having their ultimate *source* in the cognitive faculties (cf. A97). In this context, the term "subjective" underscores the status of the categories as arising from the constitution of the mind. Such a term can equally be taken to assert the negative claim that they do not have their source in objects.[17]

What this suggests is that it may be helpful to keep in mind a very general distinction between something's "being a condition [*Bedingung*]" and something's "being a ground [*Grund*]." The latter, it would appear, represents for Kant a more primary notion, such as the first condition, or source.[18] This distinction is reflected in the *Dissertation,* for whereas the laws of intellectual cognition yield objective *conditions* of judgment (conditions to which objects themselves are subject), such laws, along with the laws for sensitive cognition, are nevertheless said to be subjective *grounds* of the principles to which they give rise (2:418; 89). There, it was seen, Kant appeared to mean that the laws in question have their ultimate source in our cognitive powers. In fact, Kant opened up the possibility that some of our subjectively grounded intellectual principles might fail to yield objective conditions of judgment, for he argued that the principles of "harmony" are delusive (see Chapter 2).

Although the preceding discussion is brief, it does help us to make some sense of Kant's first account of error. As in the *Dissertation,* this theory of error follows from Kant's kind-distinction between the faculties of knowledge. According to that distinction, each faculty provides a source of unique representations. Whereas the understanding pro-

16 Here we may simply recall Kant's insistence that the categories are concepts of "objects *in general.*"

17 Note, however, that the term "subjective" in such contexts may also indicate the explanatory ground, reason for the laws, etc. in question.

18 Kant is by no means consistent in his use of terms. See, for example, B127, where Kant calls the categories both "objective grounds" (*objektiven Grund*) and a priori "conditions" (*Bedingungen*).

vides the necessary conditions under which something can be thought (the categories), sensibility provides those necessary conditions under which something can be intuited by us (space and time). And although both of these sets of conditions are necessary in order to obtain any real (material) knowledge, Kant's claim is that the two faculties may somehow "miscommunicate" and generate error. Such error is embedded in faulty judgments that indiscriminately deploy sensible and intellectual predicates without considering the restricted conditions under which they may be used properly. In the *Dissertation,* such judgments were said to involve the "contagion" of the sensitive with the intellectual and the subsequent use of sensitive predicates beyond the limits of sensuality. In the *Critique,* as we have seen, Kant is concerned not only to "curb the pretensions of sensibility" but, because the material use of the understanding is also limited to the conditions of sensibility, to limit the real application of the conditions of thought as well. Indeed, Kant's criticisms of the transcendental employment of the understanding are directed precisely toward preventing such erroneous applications of the pure categories.

Fortunately, it seems that little rides on whether we "blame" sensibility or understanding, so long as we understand Kant's more general point: errors easily arise through the failure to take notice of the source of our conceptions and to judge indiscriminately. Given this, it would appear that in the beginning of the Dialectic Kant is not really offering us any new or distinct account, so much as he is referring us back to the most general account of *judgmental* error already provided in the Analytic. It is at this point, however, that Kant's position becomes especially confusing, for he proceeds from here (and without warning) to introduce what seems to be an entirely *different* account of the error in question; and whereas the foregoing discussion located the source of error in the "influence" of sensibility on the understanding, this "second account" locates it in a unique set of principles, principles that issue neither from sensibility nor from the understanding, but rather from a third and presumably distinct activity of thought: pure reason (cf. A299/B356). Before considering this second account, some discussion of Kant's distinction between reason and understanding is in order.

The distinction between understanding and reason is clearly prefigured in Kant's early thought. In the early essay on syllogistic figures, for example, Kant distinguished between two ways of judging.[19] Although

19 *Die falsche Spitzfindigkeit der vier Syllogistischen Figuren* (2:58–59).

he denied that the understanding and reason are distinct fundamental faculties, Kant clearly wanted to distinguish between the capacity to cognize distinctly (assigned to the understanding), and the capacity for syllogistic reasoning (assigned to reason). This distinction between the two "capacities" is further elaborated and deepened in the period between the *Inaugural Dissertation* and the publication of the *Critique.* Thus, in *Reflexion* 4675, dated 1774–1775, Kant opposes the two faculties to one another by arguing that the understanding is the faculty of "thinking" and reason is the faculty of "thinking a priori without any object being given" (17:650–651).[20]

Both of the above views are carried over into the *Critique,* where Kant links reason with both the capacity of syllogistic inference and the ability to think beyond all (given) objects of experience. For now, it is important to see that this distinction between understanding and reason is the basis for one of the most significant developments in Kant's account of metaphysical error. In distinguishing between these two, it becomes possible for the first time for Kant to criticize the transcendental employment of the categories of experience, while at the same time leaving some "space" for a positive (unique) function to be assigned to the ability to think beyond experience (see Chapter 8). Before the distinction between understanding and reason was explicitly drawn, the possibility of this kind of account was not really available to Kant.

Certainly, this was not a possibility left open by the *Dissertation.* First, insofar as both of these modes of thought were assigned to the *same activity,* Kant could not simultaneously assign the cause of error to the intellect's tendency to think beyond sensible conditions and still allow the intellect legitimate use independently of those sensible conditions. Hence, in the *Dissertation,* error was essentially grounded in the pretensions not of the intellect but of sensibility, and curbing these pretensions opened up the possibility of a nonfallacious metaphysics. In the *Critique,* however, Kant can limit the use not only of sense but also of the understanding. That is, Kant can criticize the attempt to employ the *understanding* independently of experience and yet still assign a positive (necessary) function to the ability of *reason* to think beyond expe-

20 For a discussion of this *Reflexion,* see Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 32. For an interesting discussion of the possible connection between Kant's distinction between reason and understanding and his reading of Teten, see S. de Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought,* trans. A. R. K. Duncan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 85.

rience. Moreover, this distinction allows Kant to assign a positive function to reason, which is nevertheless not, like the understanding, constitutive of objects of experience. Because the function of reason is distinct from that of the understanding, then, Kant can locate the ultimate source of metaphysical error in the misuse of the otherwise positive rational activity of thinking beyond experience, and doing so does not commit him to the possibility of a nonfallacious metaphysics. This is precisely what Kant does in the *Critique,* in his "second account" of metaphysical error.

The Second Account: Reason as the Source of Error. The second account begins at A296/B352, where Kant first introduces a series of distinctions meant to isolate transcendental illusion from a host of other kinds of error or illusion. Implicit in Kant's position are three central claims: that transcendental illusion will involve or result in a *unique way* of (mis)employing the concepts of the understanding; that this misapplication is itself grounded in the use of a *unique set* of principles; and that these principles generate judgmental error, at least in part, because of their *illusory* nature.

The first distinction is between transcendental illusion (*transzendentalen Schein*) and empirical illusion (*empirischen Schein).* Here Kant makes two separate points. First, transcendental illusion, unlike empirical (or optical) illusion, does not occur during the course of the *empirical* employment of the concepts of the *understanding.* Rather, he suggests, it is characterized by the use of a unique set of principles, which from the outset defy empirical use (A296/B352). The principles in question are "transcendent" – that is, they purport to have a unique employment that transcends the bounds of possible experience – and, in so doing, offer to extend knowledge to a domain that similarly transcends possible experience (A296/B353). With this claim, Kant effectively undermines the position in the *Dreams,* where metaphysical delusion was itself said to be grounded in the misuse of empirical conceptions. In the *Critique,* that is, Kant explicitly recognizes that the ideas and principles of metaphysics cannot be "reduced" to empirical conceptions.[21] Kant also seems to shift to the view that there is no possibility of giving a "physiological" account of metaphysical error.

21 This will become clear later in the chapter. As an example, we may note that Kant explicitly distinguishes the ideas of reason from the concepts of the understanding. The ideas are also distinguished from any concepts of the imagination. I thus disagree with

Kant's second point is, for our purposes, more important. According to Kant, transcendental illusion itself *generates* a (mis)employment of the pure understanding (A296/B352). Such illusion, he states, leads us to employ the categories nonempirically, thus leaving us with a merely "deceptive" extension of the pure understanding (A296/B352). Here I take Kant to mean that transcendental illusion generates or grounds the earlier-discussed transcendental (mis)application of categories. It is very important to note that Kant wants to distinguish between, on the one hand, *transcendental illusion* and the transcendent principles that characterize it and, on the other hand, the *misemployment of the pure understanding* that is presumably generated by such illusion. This is confirmed in the text by the fact that Kant subsequently argues for a distinction between transcendental illusion and the transcendental (mis)employment of the categories. The latter is characterized by Kant as a "misemployment of the understanding" and consists in an "error in judgment when it is not duly curbed by criticism" (A296/B353),[22] whereas transcendental illusion involves the use of the *transcendent* ideas, maxims, or principles of reason.[23] Nevertheless, the introduction of reason here is perplexing, particularly because Kant had just previously claimed that all error consists in "judgment" (the relation between understanding and sensibility). Despite this, it seems clear that Kant uses this claim in order to argue that transcendental illusion is different in kind from the transcendental misemployment of the categories.

the suggestion made by Butts, who appears to want to give a psychological, nay, a physiological account of transcendental illusion. See his "Kant's Dialectic and the Logic of Illusion," pp. 314–315. I do not have a problem with the suggestion that judgmental errors themselves may have such cognitive sources.

22 Kant suggests that the result of such judgmental errors is the application of the categories beyond the domain of sensibility. As we saw in the preceding chapter, such an error is represented in the Leibnizian attempt to acquire knowledge of objects in general. In so doing, Leibniz implicitly conflates appearances with things in themselves, with the result that purely formal principles of thought are taken to hold universally, that is, of all possible objects without qualification. Here, then, the problem is that objects are taken to be things in themselves. Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, appears to be a problem where the thing in itself, understood as a condition, is erroneously understood to be an object. The result is that concepts of the understanding are applied to things in themselves. While the application of such concepts to things in general results in an employment of the understanding that transgresses its own limits, their application to things in themselves takes its departure from, and can only be accomplished through, an application of the understanding that is essentially defined by such a transgression.

23 See A297/B354. Kant's distinction between the transcendental and the transcendent misapplications of thought, considered notoriously ambiguous, is dealt with throughout the next two chapters.

Unfortunately, his own distinction on this score is still somewhat unclear. Although Kant clearly wants to distinguish between *transcendental illusion* and the transcendental misemployment of the understanding, it seems possible that he might nevertheless wish to argue that the misemployment of the understanding that results from the former is itself different from the transcendental misemployment discussed in the Analytic (cf. Chapter 3). In fact one could sensibly argue that this last distinction is crucial to Kant's position; whereas the transcendental employment of the understanding in general detailed in the Analytic involved the attempt to apply the categories in *abstraction from* the conditions of sensibility (e.g., to objects or things in general), Kant's claim now seems to be that transcendental illusion generates the attempt to apply such concepts altogether *beyond* the domain of sensibility. The misapplication of the categories in this last case would be more properly understood as a *transcendent* application (e.g., to things in themselves) and would presumably involve the misapplication of spatiotemporal predicates as well as categories. This claim will be considered more carefully in what follows; for, as we shall see in the next section, Kant suggests that transcendental illusion carries with it the propensity to take the concepts of reason to refer directly to things in themselves.

The transcendent and the transcendental applications of thought might be distinguished from one another in a number of ways. First, insofar as the transcendental application of the categories is primarily directed toward the knowledge of objects in *general,* it simply *abstracts* from any consideration of whether the objects in question are things in themselves or appearances. As we saw in the preceding chapter, an "object in general" is merely an object of *some* sensible intuition (abstraction being made only from *our particular mode* of intuition [space and time]). A thing in itself, however, is precisely an object of *our* sensible intuition (a spatiotemporal object) considered independently of the subjective conditions of space and time. Hence, while the attempt to know a thing in general is, as Kant says, an error that centers on the misuse of the understanding alone, the attempt to know a thing in itself involves the misuse of both the understanding and sensibility. Indeed, Kant sometimes suggests that the transcendent application of the categories specifically entails the use of sensible predicates, concepts, or principles beyond the limits of sensibility. This of course accords both with the first account of error offered in the Introduction to the Dialectic, and with the earlier views in the Phenomena/Noumena section and the *Dissertation.* In each of these cases, Kant seems primarily concerned to prevent the use of sen-

sible conditions, as well as the concepts and principles that relate to these, beyond the sensible domain. Once again, the problem is that subjective conditions of judgment (space and time) are held to be objective (to hold of objects independently of us).[24]

That such an employment is deemed possible in the first place is not merely the result of an oversight or error in judgment. Rather, it is due to the third feature of transcendental illusion, to wit, the illusory nature of the rational principles that guide and demand such transcendent applications. This third feature serves further to distinguish transcendental illusion from the transcendental employment of the categories. Kant's claim is that although the concepts and principles of the pure understanding (e.g., the categories) may be *misapplied* (e.g., when employed transcendentally), they are not inherently (independently of our misuse of them in judgments) error-producing or illusory. This cannot be said of the transcendent concepts and principles of *reason,* for these, according to Kant, carry with them some kind of (transcendental) illusion (A296/B353).[25] I take it that Kant is thus developing a line of thought initiated in the *Inaugural Dissertation,* where he argues that, in addition to the subreptic axioms (which flow from a conflation of sensitive and intellectual cognitions), there are certain intellectual principles that are illusory in themselves, independent of any delusive admixture of sensitive cognition (i.e., the principles of convenience, or harmony). At one point, Kant summarizes the problem as follows: "there are fundamental rules and maxims for the employment of our reason (subjectively regarded as a faculty of human knowledge), . . . and . . . these have all the appearance of being objective principles" (A297/B354).

I take this to be a crucial point in distinguishing between transcendental illusion and the transcendental application of concepts. Al-

24 This distinction is, admittedly, a subtle one. In fact, it must be conceded that just as the concept of the object in general contains under itself any sensible object (whether it be considered in accordance with or in abstraction from our particular mode of intuition), so too, the "transcendental employment of the understanding" is a general term referring to *any* application of the categories that takes place independently of the conditions of our sensibility. Thus, it includes both their application to things in general and in themselves. Indeed, this is reflected in Kant's own use of the term.

25 Hence, Kant argues for another distinction, one between transcendental illusion and logical illusion. Logical illusion, according to Kant, results from overlooking (logical) rules, and inattentiveness, but is recognized as an error upon the appropriate demonstrations (A297/B354). Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, neither results from inattentiveness nor is recognizable as "illusory" upon demonstration.

though it has not been developed in the secondary literature, Kant is obviously committed to this distinction by his own division between understanding and reason. Thus, in the Analytic of Principles, Kant divides the "higher faculties" of knowledge into understanding, judgment (*Urteilskraft*), and reason (A131/B170). In this connection, he argues that, unlike the situation with regard to understanding and judgment, transcendental logic is incapable of specifying the conditions of the correct employment of reason:

> Understanding and judgment find, therefore, in transcendental logic their canon of objectively valid and correct employment; they belong to its analytic portion. Reason, on the other hand, in its endeavors to determine something *a priori* in regard to objects, and so to extend knowledge altogether beyond the limits of possible experience, is altogether *dialectical*. Its illusory assertions [*Scheinbehauptungen*] cannot find place in a canon such as the analytic is intended to contain. (A132/B171)

Although the contrast here might at first suggest that Kant wants to say that reason, in contrast to understanding and judgment, is dialectical in virtue of the attempt to extend knowledge beyond possible experience, Kant's point is rather that *any* a priori application of reason to objects (*Gegenstände*), including appearances, is dialectical. As we shall see in Chapter 8, Kant argues that reason, unlike understanding and judgment, has *no* legitimate employment in regard to objects, and this accounts for the inherently illusory nature of its concepts and principles (cf. A307/B364).[26] This view will be elaborated in the next section; for the present, we may simply keep in mind that it is precisely the tendency to take the "subjective" principles of reason to apply to objects (to be objective) that is held responsible for metaphysical error.

Along with this new account, however, come some obvious problems, for aside from the fact that Kant once again attributes the general problem to the conflation of subjective with objective principles or conditions, this second account really bears little resemblance to the first. For one thing, Kant had explicitly argued in the first account that because there were only *two* sources of knowledge (sensibility and understanding), error must come about through the influence of the former on the latter. Here, however, he suggests that reason, too, is to be regarded in some sense (i.e., "subjectively") as a faculty of knowledge (see Chap-

26 See Onora O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason,"in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 280–308.

ter 5). Such a claim, whatever it means, would seem to generate further problems in connection with the first account; insofar as the concepts or principles of *reason* are explicitly distinguished from those of both *sensibility* and *understanding*, we appear to have no choice but to assume that the subjective and objective principles or conditions that are being conflated are very different in each of the two accounts. It seems that the only way to avoid inconsistency is to choose between these two different accounts. In line with this, Bennett argues that the first account "conflicts" with everything else Kant says with respect to the sources of dialectical error, and although he does not find the second account particularly compelling either, he nevertheless presents it exclusively as Kant's official position.[27] One problem with Bennett's dismissal of the first account, however, is that, as we have seen, the first account does not conflict with everything else Kant has to say on dialectical error. Although it may be different from what he has to say about *transcendental illusion*, it seems perfectly consistent with the line of criticism offered not only in the Analytic, but also in the precritical development. Any interpretation that can make sense of Kant's account of transcendental illusion without sacrificing these earlier accounts would thus seem to be superior to Bennett's "either/or" solution.

Fortunately, there is another way to make sense of Kant's claims that does not involve dismissing either of the above accounts. The first thing to note is the distinction between transcendental illusion and "judgmental error." Such a distinction allows Kant to maintain that, although transcendental illusion grounds or generates judgmental error (in the form of a misapplication of the categories), it nevertheless remains *distinct from* such an error. Consequently, Kant can consistently contend both that *transcendental illusion* is itself rooted in the use of reason and its unique principles and maxims, and that the *judgmental error* generated from such illusion involves a "mix-up" of sensibility and the understanding (i.e., of subjective and objective conditions of judgment). This distinction is important for reasons other than that it allows us to reconcile between what otherwise appear to be the two "competing" accounts of dialectical error. Indeed, as I suggested in the Introduction, this distinction is absolutely crucial to Kant's overall position in the Dialectic. In order to understand exactly how this distinction works,

27 See Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 267.

however, we must first turn to Kant's own characterization of transcendental illusion.

Reason as the Seat of Transcendental Illusion

Most commentators note that Kant operates with a conception of "transcendental illusion," and most acknowledge that such illusion is held responsible for metaphysical error. It is also clear that Kant takes reason to be the source of such illusion. Rendering these claims more concrete and specific, however, has proved to be difficult, and the nature of the illusion is usually glossed over in exceedingly general terms.[28] In an otherwise far-reaching examination, for example, Nieman offers only a few scattered references to the illusion that characterizes reason, and in none of these places does she explicitly discuss those passages in the introduction to the Dialectic where Kant offers his "definition" of transcendental illusion proper. Instead, transcendental illusion is alternatingly described as the tendency to take reason's principles to be "constitutive,"[29] to "reify the Unconditioned,"[30] and to "disparage the power of ideas without objects."[31] Although these claims certainly accord with Kant's own, they are far too general to allow for any detailed examination of the doctrine that is central to Kant's theory of reason. Let us begin, therefore, with Kant's own introduction to this important topic.

In the Introduction to the Dialectic, Kant identifies transcendental illusion with the propensity to take "the subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts . . . for an objective necessity in the determination of things in themselves" (A297/B354). Note first, that the "subjective necessity of a connection of our concepts" to which Kant here refers is a necessity prescribed by reason; it expresses the demand (ostensibly endemic to reason) that there be complete, systematic unity of thought. This claim is grounded in Kant's characterization of reason as a faculty of principles (B356). Although Kant generally uses the term "principle" to refer to any knowledge (proposition) which can be *used as* a principle (i.e., as a major premise in a syllogism), he claims that in

28 There are obviously some exceptions to this. See, again, Karl Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 249–279.

29 Susan Nieman, *The Unity of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 100.

30 Ibid., p. 188. 31 Ibid., p. 100.

its strict sense the term only applies to "that knowledge alone in which I apprehend the particular in the universal through concepts" (B357). The defining characteristic of principles in this strict sense is that they purport to generate synthetic knowledge without any contribution from intuition.[32] The possibility that reason may actually provide synthetic knowledge in the form of universal propositions obtained from concepts alone is precisely what is at issue here, for it is just this capacity that the metaphysician wants to deploy in drawing the metaphysical conclusions.

Now, one thing is clear: Kant does not want to identify the *source* of this metaphysical error solely with the transcendental employment of the understanding per se, for if the problem were simply that one is taking pure concepts of the understanding to provide the basis for synthetic a priori knowledge, then of course Kant would not need a Dialectic at all. The arguments in the Analytic would already suffice to demonstrate the inadequacy of so deploying the categories. At most, then, the dialectic would be an instantiation of an already demonstrated point. Kant seems, however, to think that the Dialectic has something new to offer – an account of the ultimate source of the disciplines of special metaphysics – and he thinks that the reference to reason here will provide a unique insight into what is going on in these disciplines. Thus, the question with which Kant begins is whether reason can be isolated as an "independent source of concepts and judgments which spring from it alone, . . . by means of which it relates to objects" (B362).

That reason can be "isolated" is a claim to which Kant is clearly committed, for aside from the question of whether it provides an independent and unique source of concepts or principles, Kant argues that it has its own unique activity and purpose. Indeed, the general characterization of reason as a faculty of principles is supposed to show exactly this. That characterization allows Kant to develop further his distinction between reason and the understanding:[33]

32 Because the so-called principles of pure understanding generate synthetic knowledge only when applied either to intuition in general or to particular intuitions (for without these they are mere functions of thought), they are not, strictly speaking, "principles" (although in relation to the cases subsumed under them they are employed as principles).

33 I am admittedly glossing over a rather difficult issue with respect to the distinction between reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*). For one thing, it is not clear whether the distinction is best understood to be one of kind or degree. Bennett, for example, characterizes the distinction between understanding and reason in terms of dif-

> Understanding may be regarded as a faculty which secures the unity of appearances by means of rules, and reason as being the faculty which secures the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Accordingly, reason never applies itself to experience or to any object, but to understanding, in order to give to the manifold knowledge of the latter an *a priori* unity by means of concepts, a unity which may be called the unity of reason, and which is quite different in kind from any unity that can be accomplished by the understanding. (B359)

In general, then, the aim of reason is to order and unify the concepts of the understanding by subsuming them under principles (i.e., universal conditions) (cf. A305). As such, reason operates in accordance with the aim of securing systematic unity of thought. This aim is first presented to us (in the Introduction to the Dialectic) as a purely formal feature of reason in its logical employment, and this logical activity of subsuming the concepts (or rules) of the understanding under more general principles is said here, as in the earlier Essay on Syllogistic Figures, to take the form of making mediate (or syllogistic) inferences.[34] On the basis of this characterization of the rational faculty, Kant claims that reason embodies the following "subjective law" (see A306/B363):

P_1 Find for the conditioned knowledge given through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion. (A308/B364)

ferent degrees of conceptualizing. Accordingly, the understanding is assigned a sort of "caveman's theorizing," while reason is assigned the "intellectual's theorizing" (Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 263). In arguing for a difference of degree, Bennett is in accord with T. K. Swing (*Kant's Transcendental Logic* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969], pp. 241–242). It is clear, however, that Kant at least *intended* his distinction to express a difference in kind, if not between two fundamental faculties, at least between two functions of thought (cf. A302/B359; A307/B364). Although the difficulties with the "kind-distinction" cannot be denied, there have been attempts to capture the qualitative difference between the two unifying functions of the understanding and reason, respectively. One is offered by Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 207–211. See also Gerd Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 471–681. I discuss this issue much more fully in Chapter 8 in connection with the regulative employment of the ideas.

34 Unlike inferences of the understanding, which Kant claims are "immediate," rational inferences require the positing of a mediate judgment in order to yield the conclusion. The inferences made by reason, then, are syllogistic inferences (cf. A304–307). The specific role played by reason in such syllogisms is presumably that of determining concepts

Kant argues that P_1 is "subjective" in the sense that it expresses a conceptual requirement, one that governs the use of our intellectual faculties.[35] P_1 expresses reason's concern to achieve the highest possible unity of thought. Kant expresses this idea in a number of different ways. In addition to calling it a "subjective law," P_1 is said to be a "logical maxim," a purely formal requirement, or a (logical) "precept" of reason (cf. A309/B363). I take it that by referring to the principle as "logical" Kant wants to underscore that it is confined to the merely logical or formal employment of reason – that is, that it serves as a rule that abstracts from any and all content of knowledge. Because it is both a logical or formal principle, *and* a subjective one (a prescription issuing from reason for the use of reason), its use is not necessarily justified in relation to objects for, by itself, it does not conform to the requirements of possible experience (space and time). Hence, Kant claims that the logical maxim of reason "does not prescribe any law for objects, and does not contain any general ground of the possibility of knowing or determining objects as such" (A306/B363). Rather, Kant tells us, it is merely a "subjective law for the orderly management of the possessions of the understanding," which "lacks objective validity" (A306/B363). Similarly, he claims that the rational requirement that there be a complete, systematic unity of thought is only a "subjective" or "logical" *necessity* (A297/B354).

That P_1 expresses a *necessity* that is subjective would appear to mean, for Kant, that it constrains us to seek unity in our thought and that we are constrained to seek such unity by the very nature of our (subjective) reason. Kant's point is that the requirement for unity does not similarly extend to objects. Put in another way, P_1 expresses a fact about *reason*, not about objects. This same point is formulated in the Deduction, where Kant claims that *if* the concept of cause rested solely on a "subjective" necessity (where we were constrained simply by the nature of our cognitive capacities to connect various empirical representations according to the causal rule), then the cause-and-effect relation would not be a truly (i.e., objectively) "necessary" relation. Rather, in such a case, the causal principle would amount to a maxim for us. The claim

of objects according to rules provided by the understanding, and it is through this process that reason undertakes the unification of the understanding (A305, A299/B356–A300/B357). This view is obviously adumbrated in the early essay on syllogisms; see Kant's *Die falsche Spitzfindigkeit der vier syllogistischen Figuren* (2:45–61).

35 Strictly speaking, P_1, as a maxim of reason, governs the use of reason. But Kant later suggests that it governs the use of the understanding as well. See Chapter 8.

that certain objects are causally related would thus be reduced to the claim that we are so constituted that we cannot *think* certain representations except as "causally connected" (B168). Note that, so converted, the causal maxim may be understood to represent a subjective condition – a requirement that would have to be met in order to *think* certain empirical representations. It would not follow from this subjective necessity, however, that objects themselves are indeed related in accordance with the causal maxim, and to assume that they are would be to mistake a subjective condition of thought (and hence a subjective necessity) for an objective condition of the possibility of objects (and hence an objective necessity). This would appear to ground Kant's claim in the Deduction that, in such a case, the assumed objective validity of our causal judgments, and hence the knowledge they purport to provide, would be "nothing but sheer illusion" (*nichts als lauter Schein;* B168).

On essentially these same grounds Kant sometimes seems to argue that the principle of systematic unity is "illusory." Although the principle expresses reason's concern to achieve the highest possible unity of thought, it is only a logical maxim and, as such, cannot be said to determine objects. Hence, P_1 does not by itself provide the grounds for any a priori judgments about objects, for it abstracts from all content of knowledge; it simply prescribes that unity of thought be *sought*. Because of this, any use of P_1 as an objectively valid principle, any attempt to draw objective or material truths from it, is "illusory."

Kant's repeated characterizations of the principle as "logical" and "subjective" appear to be offered as rejections of the attempt to view the demand for systematic unity as having objectivity of any kind; indeed, Kant himself explicitly denies that this demand for unity justifies us in expecting any corresponding unity in objects themselves (A306/B363). Despite this, Kant's ultimate position is that this demand for systematic unity of thought is necessarily conceived by reason as a transcendental principle which *is* objective. Indeed, Kant goes on to claim that we *cannot help but* take P_1 to be objective. According to him, in order for P_1 to have any epistemic force, it is *necessary* to assume it to be objectively valid. Kant puts this last claim in another way by suggesting that, in order to carry out the rational demand, we naturally slide from the subjective or logical maxim, P_1, to another, synthetic, principle, to wit:[36]

36 P_2 is synthetic insofar as it asserts a connection between conditioned and the absolutely

P_2 If the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, subordinated to one another – a series which is therefore itself unconditioned – is likewise given, that is, is contained in the object and its connection. (A308/B364)

Note that the movement from P_1 to P_2 (which Kant calls the "supreme principle of pure reason" [*obersten Prinzip der reinen Vernunft*; A309/B366]) represents a slide from a principle expressing a subjective necessity to a "transcendental" principle asserting an objective necessity (cf. A648/B676).[37] This general diagnosis of the error is, of course, familiar to us from Kant's earlier writings and represents a line of thinking that seems to be fundamental to his understanding of metaphysical error. As far back as the *Dilucidatio,* for example, Kant located the source of metaphysical error in the fact that we are compelled to slide from certain merely formal, but subjectively necessary, principles to other (related) material ones.[38] In a way similar to this, Kant now suggests, we move from the subjective or logical requirement for complete unity of thought to the assumption of an "unconditioned" that holds of objects themselves.[39] Because of this, Kant first seems to mean that P_2 is "transcendental" insofar as it is used without any regard to the conditions under which it could be applied to objects of experience. This accords with Kant's use of the term at the beginning of the Dialectic (A296/B351). It is further consistent with his earlier characterization of transcendental illusion as the conflation of the logical maxim (P_1) with "an objective necessity in the determination of *things in themselves.*" Insofar as the principle is used without regard to (independently of) the conditions under which objects are given in experience, it is erro-

unconditioned, a connection that cannot be inferred immediately from the conditioned alone.

37 The distinction between P_1 and P_2 is, strangely enough, not usually discussed in the secondary literature. Oftentimes, the two principles are taken to be identical. Norman Kemp Smith is guilty of this (*A Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason"* [New York: Humanities Press, 1962], p. 453). The connection between these two principles is similarly overlooked. See Chapter 8 on the regulative employment of reason.

38 This of course was precisely Kant's complaint with the metaphysician's use of the "merely negative" principle of contradiction. There, the metaphysician is said to slide from the merely "negative" principle of contradiction to an affirmative judgment (that of which the opposite is false is itself true), and to do so by some rational constraint. See Chapter 1.

39 See Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in Guyer, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* pp. 250–251.

neously thought to be applicable to objects considered independently of these conditions (i.e., to things in themselves).

In the Introduction to the Dialectic, Kant suggests that it is the assumption of the transcendental principle P_2 (this transcendental illusion) that provides the transcendental ground of the formal fallacies of metaphysics. Although Kant's defense of this last claim is developed over the next three chapters, it is important to note at this point that Kant expends much effort intimating that the principle cannot be used to ground the arguments of traditional metaphysics.

> Take the principle, that the series of conditions (whether in the synthesis of appearances, or even in the thinking of things in general) extends to the unconditioned. Does it or does it not have objective applicability? What are its implications as regards the empirical employment of the understanding? Or is there no such objectively valid principle of reason, but only a logical precept, to advance toward completeness by an ascent to ever higher conditions and so to give to our knowledge the greatest possible unity or reason? Can it be that this requirement of reason has been wrongly treated in being viewed as a transcendental principle or pure reason, and that we have been overhasty in postulating such an unbounded completeness in the series of conditions in the objects themselves? (A309/B366)

In this passage Kant already hints that he takes the arguments of rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology to be grounded in the transcendental illusion that he identifies with the assumption of P_2. Although this clearly suggests that the demand for systematic unity cannot be deployed as the basis for any metaphysical knowledge of the transcendent objects of metaphysics, it does not seem to preclude the necessity of the principle generally. In this connection, notice that Kant elsewhere suggests that the supreme principle of pure reason is "transcendental" in the sense that it is *necessary,* or somehow expresses a necessary condition of experience. This claim is particularly apparent in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, where Kant explicitly argues that the transcendental illusion (and so the additional assumption of P_2) is unavoidable and necessary (A645/B673). Accordingly, Kant's view is that the transcendental principle that states that an unconditioned unity is already given is itself a rational assumption that must be made if we are to secure unity of the understanding and knowledge.

The suggestion that P_2 is itself necessary is perhaps the most perplexing aspect of Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion. Presumably, for Kant, such an assumption is epistemologically necessary insofar as it provides to our purely rational principles and ideas the objective force required if we are to apply them to the contents of the understanding. This central claim can, in a preliminary way, be clarified by examining the connection between P_1 and P_2 that emerges from Kant's account of illusion. On this score, note that, although P_2 appears to be an entirely different principle from P_1, Kant's view seems to be that P_1 and P_2 express the very same demand of reason, viewed in different ways. Put most simply, P_2 just is P_1 when it is conceived by reason in abstraction from the conditions of the understanding. This allows Kant to maintain *both* that the demand, principle, or maxim for systematic unity, viewed in abstraction from the restricting conditions of the understanding, is a transcendental principle of pure reason *and* that its (necessary) application to the manifold, which requires its restriction to the conditions in question, renders it "merely prescriptive."

It might seem strange to say that the formal or logical ("subjective") principle P_1 is somehow the same as the transcendental ("objective") principle P_2.[40] After all, haven't we seen Kant go to great lengths to distinguish between these two different principles? Nevertheless, this kind of identification is not at all uncommon in Kant's arguments. In connection with the pure categories of the understanding, for example, we have already seen that Kant says that the categories "just are" the logical functions of judgment viewed in connection to a manifold of intuition (see Chapter 3). Correspondingly, Kant argues that independently of any manifold of intuition, the pure concepts of the understanding are nothing but forms or functions of judgment. In this, Kant should not be understood to be arguing that there is no difference between the thought of a form of judgment ("if A, then B") and that of the corresponding pure concept ("substance"), as if these two things are, strictly speaking, identical. What is crucial to Kant's position is rather that the *same act* of the understanding is being viewed in two different ways, with different results. If we view the formal activity of the understanding in all abstraction from the manifold of intuition,

40 I am indebted to Robert Butts for his comments on an early version of this section read at the meetings of the North American Kant Society, Pacific Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association, Los Angeles, March 1994.

then there is no content for thought, and we are left with the consideration of a pure form of judgment. If, however, we view the activity of thinking as determining some manifold in a specific way (in accordance with a particular rule), then we are left with a particular way of thinking possible objects (a pure concept).[41]

It seems that Kant is arguing analogously with respect to P_1 and P_2. The assumption that there is an unconditioned completeness and a systematic unity to be found (P_2) is an a priori requirement of reason; indeed, it is expressive of the very nature of reason. Thus, as we have seen, Kant refers to this as the "supreme principle of pure reason." Such an assumption, however, is illusory in the sense that it presumes something about things considered in themselves, and this transcends our capacity for knowledge.[42] The necessary, unavoidable (i.e., transcendental) status of P_2 nevertheless remains for reason. From the standpoint of the understanding (given the critical philosophy), however, the assumption can only have a regulative status. More specifically, if the assumption is to function as the basis for any empirical inquiries, it can only be regarded as a prescription to seek a unity of knowledge the objective correlate of which is necessarily postulated by reason. Hence, although reason must indeed posit an unconditioned unity as already objectively given, such unity can only function as an ideal in light of which we direct our investigations into phenomena. What we are not entitled to do is to assume that the unity that is being postulated by reason provides the basis for any direct metaphysical (synthetic a priori) knowledge of objects. Indeed, to take the principle (P_2) to express something about the way objects are constituted, and so as a means to a priori knowledge of objects, would be to fall victim to traditional metaphysics, and to treat appearances as things in themselves. This problem, of course, occupies the discussion in the next three chapters. It can be noted here, however,

41 I am indebted to Allison's account of the connection between the forms of judgment and the categories. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 115–122.

42 To the extent that P_2 asserts that the absolutely unconditioned is given, it must be understood to go well beyond any experience and thus to involve a claim about things in themselves. Kant, as we shall see, is quite explicit about this at both A297/B354 and A499/B527. More generally, it should be noted that reason, to the extent that its essential goal is to secure unconditioned knowledge, deploys ideas that themselves express this demand for the unconditioned and that ideas of reason (e.g., the unconditionally simple) are not ideas of any possible object of experience. Not only are the pseudo-objects thought through these ideas referred to as things in themselves, but appearances (when considered by reason to be part of an already completed system) are viewed as if they are things in themselves.

that Kant stresses that although the transcendental assumption that the unconditioned is given is unavoidable, the related prescription to seek such unity only applies to the knowledge given through the understanding; its application to either objects or the understanding itself is illicit (A648/B676). Given this, it seems that although Kant does distinguish between the logical P_1 and the transcendental P_2, this distinction issues from the procedure of transcendental reflection, whereby the same demand for systematic unity is, as it has been suggested, merely considered in two different ways. Although Kant needs to draw this distinction in order to prevent a metaphysical interpretation of this demand, his view is that this subjective condition of thought is, as it were, "always already" presented by reason in its objective form. This view, of course, is consistent with Kant's opening identification of the principles and ideas of reason as themselves inherently illusory (A296/B353).

On the interpretation offered here, P_2 is to be viewed as a transcendental presupposition, or what may be referred to as an "application condition" of P_1.[43] Hence, Kant suggests that reason introduces a transcendental content into the logical maxim (P_1) and that in so doing, yields for itself the transcendental principle (P_2) that provides the basis for the real employment of pure reason.[44] Accordingly, P_2 is a principle or presupposition that is necessary if the merely formal demand for systematic unity (P_1) is to have any real use in connection with the objective contents of the understanding. Another way of putting this connection, then, is to say that P_2 is a necessary rational assumption, which, when viewed in connection to the restricted conditions of the operation of the understanding (the categories of space and time), has merely "regulative" force. To be so "applied," that is, automatically "limits" the principle to the restricted (sensible) conditions under which the understanding must operate. Because P_1 is a principle designed for use in connection with such a manifold, it necessarily presupposes P_2 – that is, in order to use P_1 as it is designed to be used, we must assume P_2:

> It is, indeed, difficult to understand how there can be a logical principle by which reason prescribes the unity of rules, unless we also presuppose

43 The idea that it is an application condition clearly ties in with Kant's various statements about the ideas being analoga of schemata; they serve, like schemata of the understanding, as the conditions under which the concepts can be applied.

44 This obviously suggests that Kant had in mind something like a "metaphysical deduction" for the transcendental principle. This is discussed later in connection with the ideas of pure reason.

> a transcendental principle whereby such a systematic unity is *a priori* assumed to be necessarily inherent in the objects . . . In order, therefore, to secure an empirical criterion [of truth] we have no option save to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679)

The positive and necessary role this illusion plays in theoretical inquiries is discussed in Chapter 8, where we shall have occasion to consider the arguments in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic and the regulative employment of reason. Nevertheless, the foregoing passage suggests that Kant wishes to claim not only that the transcendental *principle* of reason (P_2) is indispensably necessary, but that its *illusory status* is as well. Kant's claim that the illusion is necessary is seldom emphasized in the secondary literature, even among those who wish to defend the strong claim that Kant is assigning a necessary (transcendental) status to the demand for systematic unity. Among those who do mention this feature of Kant's account, many do so primarily in order to criticize him.[45] Others take the doctrine of illusion to play a merely negative role in Kant's philosophy, as providing an account of the erroneous (metaphysical) use of the ideas.[46] Yet, as Buchdahl notes, Kant does argue that the illusion itself is necessary.[47] Consider the following: "This illusion [*Illusion*] (which need not, however, be allowed to deceive [*betrügt*] us) is indispensably necessary if we are to direct the understanding beyond every given experience" (A645/B673).

As noted in my Introduction, Kant further emphasizes this point by means of an optical analogy, arguing that just as the optical illusion involved in mirrorvision is necessary for (i.e., makes possible) the "seeing" of things that lie behind our backs, so too, transcendental illusion is necessary for (makes possible) the "knowing" of things that lie beyond our particular experiences (cf. A645/B673).[48]

It is by means of such optical analogies that Kant further "argues for"

45 Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* pp. 267–270; Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 457; Patricia Kitcher, "Kant's Paralogisms," *Philosophical Review* 91, no. 4 (1982): 518; W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), pp. 248–249.

46 Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 194–196. See also Nieman, *Unity of Reason.*

47 Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science,* p. 527. Although he mentions it, he does not develop it.

48 Such a claim is made in connection with Kant's views concerning the "regulative" employment of the ideas of reason. This is discussed in Chapter 8.

his inevitability thesis – the thesis concerning the inevitable or unavoidable nature of transcendental illusion:

> This is an *illusion* [*Illusion*] which can no more be prevented than we can prevent the sea appearing higher at the horizon than at the shore, since we see it through higher light rays; or to cite a still better example, than the astronomer can prevent the moon from appearing larger at its rising. (A297/B354)

> That the illusion should . . . actually disappear and cease to be an illusion [*Schein*], is something which transcendental dialectic can never be in a position to achieve. For here we have to do with a *natural* and inevitable *illusion* [*Illusion*], which rests on subjective principles, and foists them upon us as objective. (A298/B355)

In my Introduction to this work, I noted how Kant's insistence on the inevitability of transcendental illusion seems inconsistent with his subsequent attempt to "correct" and/or avoid altogether the errors of his predecessors. The problem, once again, is that Kant wants to hold *both* that the dialectical illusions are somehow inescapable *and* that it is possible to avoid succumbing to the actual "errors" that are involved with such illusions. As we have seen, these two claims seem incompatible. If the illusions are inescapable, then it is difficult to see how we can avoid the associated errors, and if we can do the latter, it makes no sense to say that we are inevitably deceived. Here, however, the previously drawn distinction between transcendental illusion and judgmental error is crucial. In the first section of this chapter, this distinction allowed us to reconcile between the two "competing" accounts of the source of error by suggesting that transcendental illusion not be confused with judgmental error. As we have just seen, transcendental illusion is not, strictly speaking, a *judgmental* error at all, but rather, as its name implies, an *illusion*.[49] It may further be noted here that the distinction between such illusion and judgmental error provides an obvious response to the charges of inconsistency that arise in connection with Kant's inevitability thesis. According to this distinction, Kant's position is *not* inconsistent, for while the *illusions* of the Dialectic are inescapable, unavoidable, and the like, the judgmental *errors* made on the basis of such illusions need not be. Such a view is reflected in Kant's frequent claims that even

49 This becomes clearer in Chapter 8, in connection with Kant's characterization of the "projecting" activity of reason.

though we must remain the victims of unceasing illusion, we may nevertheless avoid committing any actual errors because of this (see, e.g., A297/B354; A298/B355).

As I also suggested in the Introduction, the interpretation offered here centers on the fact that, for Kant, transcendental illusion is not necessarily or in itself *deceptive,*[50] although, in accordance with a misapplication of the categories, it grounds certain (fallacious) inferences that are. This claim goes back to the *Dreams,* where Kant argued that, unlike the errors of the visionary, the errors stemming from the delusions of the metaphysician might be avoidable. That Kant does not consider the unavoidable illusion (P_2) to be in itself or necessarily deceptive is again clear from the foregoing use of optical analogy. In likening transcendental illusion to the moon's appearing larger at its rising, or the sea's appearing higher at the horizon, Kant suggests that even though we may be unable to prevent ourselves from "seeing" objects in this way, we need not (at least not necessarily) *judge* them actually to be the way we see them.[51] Hence, Kant argues, the transcendental illusion (*Schein*) need not deceive (*betrügt*) us. Consider the following:

> The transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with exposing the illusion [*Schein*] of transcendent judgments, and at the same time take precautions that we be not deceived by it. (A298/B355)

> This illusion [*Illusion*] (which need not, however, be allowed to deceive [*betrügt*] us) is indispensably necessary if we are to direct the understanding beyond every given experience. (A654/B673)

These passages clearly indicate that although Kant takes the "illusion" that grounds the metaphysical move to the unconditioned to be itself both unavoidable and necessary, he does not take it to be neces-

50 Meerbote distinguishes between deceiving and nondeceiving semblance in his introduction to the translation of Kant's "Concerning Sensory Illusion and Poetic Fiction." See *Kant's Latin Writings, Translations, Commentaries and Notes,* ed. L. W. Beck (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 193–201. It should be noted in this connection that such a distinction is indicated in the *Critique* by Kant's use of different terms. In speaking of "illusion" Kant for the most part uses the terms *Illusion* or *Schein.* This is to be contrasted with Kant's references to "delusion" (*Wahn*). Kant frequently claims that while the illusion (*Illusion, Schein*) may be unavoidable, it need not deceive (*betrügt*) us.

51 Kant's use of optical analogy in characterizing metaphysical error goes back at least as far as 1766. See his *Träume eines Geistsehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (2:315–384). I consider this to be one of the most interesting aspects of Kant's account of transcendental illusion. Obviously, such analogies involve certain problems that can-

sarily deceptive. Demonstrating this claim requires considerable argumentation, as will be shown over the next four chapters. Before this, however, it is crucial to note that this "move" to the unconditioned is represented by what Kant calls the transcendental concepts or "ideas" of reason.

The Transcendental Concepts of Pure Reason

In the same way that the categories were characterized in terms of the activity of thinking possible objects, Kant generally characterizes the transcendental concepts of reason (the ideas) in terms of the activity of "thinking" the unconditioned.[52] Hence, such ideas may be viewed as ways of securing the complete, systematic unity of thought required by reason. Kant's account of such ideas (and their origin), however, is notoriously obscure. As Allen Wood notes, Kant consciously adopts the term "idea" from Plato, for whom the ideas or forms (*eidos*) are often referred to as the "prototypes," "archetypes," or "models" of their corresponding appearances (cf. A313/B370–A320/B377).[53] What appears to be significant for Kant in this respect is the fact that the ideas are held to be a priori modes or sources of knowledge that "so far transcend the bounds of experience that no given empirical object can ever coincide with them" (A314/B371).[54] The doctrine of the ideas of reason thus bears a close resemblance to the dogmatic use of the intellectual concepts in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. There, the principles of the pure intellect were said to "issue into some exemplar," which provided the standard for all other things.

As if to underscore this distinct nonempirical status of an idea, while continuing to view it as illusory, Kant sometimes refers to reason's idea as a "*focus imaginarious*." In this, Kant would seem to want to emphasize their status as "projections" issuing from reason itself. The illusory nature of the ideas is thus grounded in the fact that they present themselves to us as metaphysical entities having mind independence. In

not be considered here. This issue is discussed more fully in Chapter 8, in connection with the claim that the idea of reason is an imaginary focal point, a *focus imaginarious*.

52 See Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* pp. 17–18, and Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), chap. 7.

53 Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* p. 17.

54 Kant's indebtedness to Plato has interesting implications for any interpretation of the proper use and function of the ideas of reason. This is discussed in connection with Kant's discussion of the regulative employment of the ideas in Chapter 8.

Kant's terminology, the ideas tend to be "hypostatized." The problem is that there is no object that could be known to correspond to the ideas of reason. Such ideas are to be distinguished, then, from the transcendental concepts of the *understanding* (the categories), for the latter are to be understood precisely as concepts of possible (i.e., empirical) objects, or as ways of thinking possible sensible intuitions. This distinction between the ideas and the categories goes hand in hand with the distinction between reason and understanding. As we saw, Kant argues that reason is different in kind from the understanding on the grounds that each has a unique function and "object."[55] Once again, the "object" of the understanding is generally held by Kant to be sensibility. Accordingly, its function is to unify the matter of sensibility by subsuming it under certain concepts (categories). In contrast to this, Kant argues that the "object" of reason is the understanding. The function of reason, as we have seen, is to unify systematically the knowledge given through the understanding (and sensibility) by subsuming it under certain ideas or principles.[56]

It is clear that Kant wants to argue in this connection that an idea of reason accomplishes the above task by furnishing the "unconditioned" – that is, a principle that provides the ultimate (explanatory) ground for some particular set of our representations. But while such an idea, according to Kant, is generated by the rational demand for the unconditioned, his account of just how such a demand "generates" the ideas of reason is less clear. One problem concerns Kant's contention that there are three (and only three) "official" ideas. The problem here stems from the fact that, despite his attempt to show that reason is necessarily led to the three theoretical ideas at issue in the Dialectic (the "soul," the "world," and "God"), Kant actually identifies a number of other rational ideas in his discussions.[57] Nevertheless, Kant's attempt to undermine the three "pseudosciences" of rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology is based on the contention that each of these disciplines involves the misconstrual of one of the three particular ideas of reason (the "soul," the "world," and "God," respectively).

55 De Vleeschauwer discusses the origin of this distinction between reason and understanding as having different objects or spheres of application. See *The Development of Kantian Thought,* pp. 82–88.

56 Kant sometimes articulates this difference in a different way by claiming that the understanding allows us to understand, reason allows us to conceive (A311/B367).

57 Kant talks about the idea of freedom, the virtuous man, and a host of theoretical ideas.

Given this, it seems clear that Kant needs to provide us with *some* account of the origin of these ideas. It is precisely here, however, that Kant's arguments are commonly thought to be lacking, with the result that his position is frequently rejected as being an offshoot of his adherence to a rigid and artificial architectonic.[58] Although it cannot be denied that these problems are real, it should be noted that Kant himself appears to have attempted to provide an account of the origin of the ideas. Whatever we may ultimately decide as to the plausibility of his position, it is at least worth examining more closely.

Kant's arguments are analogous to those used in his metaphysical deduction of the categories.[59] At A336/B393, Kant refers to his "deduction" of the ideas of reason as a "subjective" deduction or derivation. It is clear, however, that the argument offered essentially amounts to a metaphysical deduction much like that given of the pure concepts. In referring to the deduction as "subjective," Kant would appear to want to distinguish it from a "transcendental" or, as he calls it in the Dialectic, an "objective" deduction – that is, one which justifies the *use* of the concepts in relation to objects of experience. The "metaphysical deduction" of the ideas of reason is, broadly speaking, offered from A321/B378–A338/B396. There Kant argues that just as the (logical) forms of our judgment, when applied to intuitions, yield the categories, so too, the "form of syllogisms," when applied to the "synthetic unity of intuitions under the direction of the categories," yields the transcendental ideas of reason (A321/B378). Although this suggests that Kant's aim will be to derive the ideas simply from the *form* of inference, his actual arguments on this score are somewhat confusing. Indeed, shortly after making this claim, Kant informs us that the transcendental concept of reason is essentially the concept of the "totality of the conditions for any given conditioned" (A322/B379). Such a "totality" of conditions is clearly a concept sought in the synthesis of intuitions; it is not a purely *formal* concept.[60] From this Kant concludes that there will be just as many pure concepts of reason as there are kinds of (relational) synthesis by means of the categories. More specifically, he suggests that there will be an idea in relation to the categorial synthesis in a subject (the "soul"), an idea in relation to the hypothetical synthesis of the

58 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 450; Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 211; F. E. England, *Kant's Conception of God* (New York: Humanities Press, 1929), pp. 117–120.

59 Kant is explicit about this. See, e.g., A321/B378; A329/B386–A330/B387.

60 The corresponding formal concept is that of universality.

member of a series (the "world"), and one in relation to the disjunctive synthesis of the parts of a system ("God") (A323/B380). Indeed, according to Kant, a pure concept of reason can in general be "explained" by the concept of the unconditioned, "conceived as containing a ground of the synthesis of the conditioned" (A322/B379).

Kant is often criticized for moving from claims about the form of inference to claims about synthesis. Robert Pippin, for example, claims that Kant is simply unclear about how to derive the ideas of reason.[61] A very similar objection is offered by Kemp Smith, according to whom Kant's attempt to derive the ideas from the form of inference is "wholly artificial." Such an attempt, according to Kemp Smith, conflicts with Kant's *actual* method, which involves obtaining the ideas through combining the concept of the unconditioned with the three categories of relation.[62] Such criticisms seem to have two legitimate concerns in mind. On the one hand, there is a problem with Kant's attempt to "connect" his derivation of the ideas up to the earlier discussed demand for the unconditioned. On the other, there is the more general problem of attempting to "deduce" sets of pure (transcendental) concepts simply from the *forms* of thought. At some point, as we shall see, these two concerns merge.

Deducing Concepts from Forms of Thought. The first difficulty stems from the attempt to move or argue from the form of inference (i.e., certain logical functions of thought) to a set of pure concepts. Precisely because such a move is deemed problematic, Kant's claims about synthesis are viewed as alternative strategies of deducing the ideas, strategies that have little to do with the alleged attempt to deduce the ideas from the form of syllogism. As Kant's earlier metaphysical deduction of the *categories* is frequently criticized on the same grounds, it may be helpful to consider it here.

As is well known, the earlier metaphysical deduction centers on Kant's attempt to derive the categories from the forms of judgment. As with the "deduction" of the ideas, Kant thinks his method guarantees that the list of categories is both complete and exhaustive (cf. A81/B107). Once again, however, the problem is to make sense of Kant's attempt to argue from these forms or functions of judgment (as set forth in general logic) to a particular set of pure (transcendental)

61 Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 211. 62 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 450.

concepts – that is, a set of rules for judging about objects.[63] Put in another way, the problem is how Kant can move from the (logical) characterization of judgmental *forms* (a characterization that totally abstracts from any relation to an object) to the specification of a particular set of (transcendental) concepts of "objects in general." As we know, by the latter is meant concepts that make possible the thought of any object whatsoever.[64]

In the metaphysical deduction of the categories, Kant emphasizes that the *same* functions of thought that characterize (generate) the abstract judgmental forms also characterize (generate) the pure concepts of the understanding (A79/B104–105).[65] Hence, the attempt to move from the functions of judgment (as articulated in general logic) to the modes of knowledge (as articulated in transcendental logic) is explained by the fact that general and transcendental logic deal with the very same faculty (the understanding) and the very same activity (unification). In support of such a claim, the following passage is usually cited:

> The same function which gives unity to the various representations *in a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition;* and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding. The same understanding, through the same operations by which in concepts, by means of analytical unity, it produced the logical form of a judgment, also introduces a transcendental content into its representations, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general. So we call these representations pure concepts of the understanding, which apply *a priori* to objects – a conclusion which general logic cannot establish. (A79/B104–105)

As the passage indicates, Kant wants to argue that the logical functions of judgment just *are* the pure concepts, considered in abstraction from any manifold of intuition (or, correlatively, that the pure concepts

63 Allison refers to the pure concepts as "second order rules" or "rules for the formulation of empirical concepts, which are first order rules" (Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 116). In this, Allison is in agreement with Wolff. See Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 24–25.

64 Regardless of how such an object is given, i.e., an object of intuition in general.

65 There are, of course, various interpretations of Kant's metaphysical deduction. In what follows, I am drawing on the discussion offered by Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* esp. chap. 6, pp. 115–129.

just *are* the logical functions of judgment when these are applied to a manifold of intuition in general). This, of course, explains how Kant can claim to move from the form of judgment to the pure concepts. Of special importance is the fact that, for Kant, the two are at bottom the very same (single) activity. That is, the unification of concepts in a judgment does not in fact take place independently of any synthesis of intuitions, just as the latter is itself "inseparable" from the act of judgment. Kant's point is not that the two represent separate and unique acts of thought, but that they represent two different ways of considering the one underlying activity – either in abstraction from, or in connection with, the necessary relation to some given manifold of intuition. Needless to say, this analysis entails that there is a necessary connection, for Kant, between judgment and conceptualization. In accordance with this Allison has suggested that, for Kant, to judge under a specific form just is to conceptualize given representations in a determinate way, and vice-versa.[66]

Such a view might shed some light on Kant's attempt to "deduce" the ideas (the transcendental concepts of *reason*) from the form of syllogism. Note that Kant's attempt to derive a specific set of pure (transcendental) concepts from the forms of inference would appear to be based on the contention that the very same reason (through the very same functions) that gives rise to the logical forms of syllogism also gives rise to the ideas. If an idea turns out to be simply a form of inference considered in connection with the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition, then Kant's attempt to move from such forms to the ideas will not seem unreasonable. Moreover, such a view would seem to make sense of those other passages where Kant appears to be arguing to the ideas by appealing to different kinds of synthesis by means of the categories.

That this is Kant's view is evidenced by the original formulation of the matter, where he suggests that an idea just is a form of syllogism that is applied to the "synthetic unity of intuitions under the direction of the categories" (A321/B378). The problem, of course, is to make sense of the ostensible "connection" or correlation between the particular ideas and each of the three syllogistic forms. First of all, it is clearly ridiculous to suggest that, for example, to syllogize categorically just is to deploy the idea of the *soul*. The following categorical syllogism, for instance, does not seem to have any connection whatsoever to such an idea:

66 Ibid., p. 118.

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.

Socrates is mortal.

Fortunately, however, there is no textual evidence suggesting that Kant takes the ideas to be involved in each and every syllogism of the relevant form. Instead, to say (as Kant does) that the ideas are derived from the forms of syllogism is to say merely that they are the ways of determining a particular through the universal concepts (rules) entailed in categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive judgments, respectively. Taking the first case, it can be noted that to judge categorically just is to take the logical subject within the judgment substantivally (as something which, at least within the act of judging, can never be construed as a predicate).[67] Kant's claim seems to be that the idea of the soul is the correlate of the "second-order" act of determining a particular through this general categorical concept (substance). Hence, when Kant talks about deriving the idea of the soul from the form of categorical syllogism, he is not claiming that the schema (All As are Bs; x is an A; etc.) presupposes the idea of the soul. Rather his claim is that the formal act of determining a particular by means of the specific "categorical rule" of judgment (that the subject of our judgments not be taken as predicate) itself entails the idea of an "absolute" or metaphysical subject.

Note that it does not follow that to infer categorically just is (in all cases) to conceive of an absolute or metaphysical subject. In contrast to the connection between conceptualization and judgment in the metaphysical deduction of the categories, Kant is not making a general connection between conceiving a particular unity or idea and inferring under a particular form. Quite the contrary. Because reason is here striving for unconditioned completeness, each idea is the unique syllogistic determination of a specific (major) premise, to wit, one of the formal rules of judgment (here, that the subject of our judgment not be taken as predicate, at least within the context of the judgment). The soul is determined in a syllogism whose first (major) premise is the rule of the understanding for categorical judgment. As Kant later argues in the chapter on the paralogisms, what reason does is to take this rule for categorical judgment independently of the conditions of its use for judgment and convert it into an alleged *principle of knowledge* ("That, the

67 See ibid., pp. 120–121.

representation of which is the absolute subject of our judgments, and cannot therefore be employed as determination of another thing is substance" [A348]).

Although the connection between the forms of syllogism and the specific ideas is not as artificial as it may appear at first to be, it is undeniably true that Kant's account of the connections between the forms of syllogism and other ideas is difficult to defend. This is even more true in the cases of the hypothetical and disjunctive syllogisms. The idea of the "world" is ostensibly the syllogistic determination of the hypothetical "rule" of ground to consequent. To judge hypothetically (If A, then B) just is to take two states of affairs to be related as ground and consequent. But in the antinomies chapter Kant suggests that reason takes this judgmental relation and posits the rational principle P_2 (If the conditioned is given, then the whole series of conditions, a series that is itself unconditioned, is also given), and he thus argues that the idea of the world is generated by a syllogism which has this principle as its major premise (cf. A497/B525). P_2, as "the supreme principle of pure *reason,*" may thus be viewed as the transcendental correlate of the hypothetical rule for judging, now converted into a purely rational principle of knowledge. Of course, as we already know, Kant will want to argue that the principle can only be applied in connection with the manifold of knowledge only as the regulative P_1. Presumably, what Kant has in mind here, once again, is that P_2 just is P_1 when conceived in abstraction from the conditions of the understanding, and so as a principle of knowledge.

Consideration of the above two cases suggests that *if there is* any serious connection between the three transcendental ideas on the one hand, and the "rules" or "concepts" of categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive judgment on the other, then these rules are somehow being conceived by reason in abstraction from the necessary conditions of judgment in order to be used as principles of syllogistic determination. This fact is for Kant intimately connected with reason's demand for the unconditioned. Indeed, in an account that seems to parallel the argument from the forms of syllogism, Kant claims that each idea is to be construed as a way of conceiving the unconditioned in relation to a particular set of representations. Insofar as this account will play a prominent role in the arguments of the next chapter, it is important to outline some of its general features here.

The Demand for the Unconditioned. Kant's views on this issue have already been touched on in the preceding section. There we saw that his the-

ory of reason involved the contention that the function of reason is to order the contents of the understanding. In this sense, the "demand for the unconditioned" amounted to the requirement for systematic unity of thought, where such unity is accomplished by subsuming the knowledge given through the understanding under concepts or principles that provide the ultimate logical basis (ground) for such knowledge. Precisely this requirement is expressed by P_1. We also saw, however, that P_1 is grounded in the rational assumption of P_2. That is, insofar as P_1 is to "apply to" the material knowledge given through the understanding, it must itself be assumed to be objectively valid, and so to hold of the *objects of* such knowledge. Moreover, it is taken to hold of such objects independently of the conditions of space and time. Viewed in this way, the demand for unity of *thought* is transformed into the assumption of the (objective) unity of objects themselves. Again, Kant distinguishes these two ways of seeking the unconditioned from one another by claiming that whereas the first expresses the function of reason in its "logical" employment, the second expresses the function of reason in its real or transcendental employment. And indeed, Kant gives us an indication of how he understands the demand for unity to be associated with the ideas of reason in the following important passage:

> Now all pure concepts in general are concerned with the synthetic unity of representations, but [those of them which are] concepts of pure reason (transcendental ideas) are concerned with the unconditioned synthetic unity of all conditions in general. All transcendental ideas can therefore be arranged in three classes, the *first* containing the absolute (unconditioned) *unity* of the *thinking subject,* the *second* the absolute *unity of the series of conditions of appearance,* the *third* the absolute *unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general.* (A334/B391)

As the passage indicates, Kant takes each of the ideas to express the unconditioned unity of a particular set of representations. This, together with the necessity of P_2, makes it clear that Kant is committed to the view that the ideas play a "subjective" or rational role as conditions of knowledge. The point seems to be that the transcendental ideas (e.g., the concept of the "unconditioned unity of the thinking subject") are essential to the exercise of reason as a faculty of principles. This certainly makes sense, given the strict identification of a "principle" as "that knowledge alone in which I apprehend the particular in the universal through concepts." Kant seems committed to the view that the ideas are ways of projecting the universal conditions for thinking possible objects.

Finally, although Kant maintains that reason's need to pass from the "conditioned" to the ideas of the "unconditioned" is unavoidable, we have seen that he nevertheless suggests that the transition generates an illegitimate application of the categories – an application that is illegitimate because it moves beyond the domain of possible experience in the attempt to "determine" a merely "pseudo-object." Such illegitimate applications of the categories are manifested in the dialectical inferences of reason. As we shall see, Kant intends to show that each of the central disciplines of metaphysics (rational psychology, rational cosmology, rational theology) involves such dialectical inferences. The purpose of the next three chapters, then, is to show how Kant thinks that each of the disciplines of special metaphysics is grounded in the transcendental illusion detailed here. Moreover, insofar as he takes the illusion to be unavoidable, it is crucial to his argument to show that it is possible to avoid the dialectical inferences that characterize the metaphysical positions without, however, "ridding ourselves of the illusion which unceasingly mocks and torments us." In this connection, it is important to bear in mind the distinction earlier drawn between the fallacies of the Dialectic and the illusions that generate them.

III

THE DIALECTICAL INFERENCES OF PURE REASON

5

RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PSEUDORATIONAL IDEA OF THE SOUL

We saw in the preceding chapter that the doctrine of illusion is central to Kant's theory of the intellect, or reason. At the heart of that theory is the view that reason is, by nature, constrained to seek knowledge that transcends any or all particular experiences, and that it seeks such knowledge by means of a system of ideas that provides a set of ultimate explanatory principles. Although these ideas are viewed by Kant as necessary, they also carry with them a certain unavoidable illusion. In line with this Kant claims that the conclusions drawn by the dogmatic metaphysicians in the specialized domains of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology are all based on a species of this illusion.

In this connection, it is crucial to keep in mind the distinction between the illusions and the fallacies of the Dialectic. Once again, Kant's position is that on the basis of an "unavoidable illusion" the metaphysician succumbs to formally fallacious reasoning or, what is for Kant correlated with this, to a transcendental misapplication of concepts. The *fallacies* of the Dialectic, however, are not unavoidable but flow (additionally) from the metaphysician's transcendental realism – that is, his failure to distinguish between appearances and things in themselves. Hence, in explicating these fallacies, I hope to show how Kant's doctrine of illusion provides the basis for, but is to be distinguished from, both transcendental realism and the faulty judgments and conclusions of dogmatic metaphysics.

Kant's position is complicated by the fact that he is committed to two distinct ways in which transcendental illusion generates metaphysical error. Indeed, I argue that whereas the paralogisms and the ideal op-

Much of the material from this chapter has appeared in "Illusion and Fallacy in Kant's First Paralogism," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1993): 257–282.

erate on roughly the same "model of error," the antinomies are criticized on somewhat different grounds. The reason for this stems from the nature of the problematic ideas. In the case of the paralogisms and the ideal, the concept of reason is "pseudorational." What Kant presumably means by this is that the ideas of the soul and God purport to be of "intelligible" (nonempirical, spiritual) entities but are surreptitiously thought of as objects to which categories could be synthetically attached. In contrast to this, the idea of the world is a "pseudoempirical" concept. In this case, the illusory idea purports to be empirical but is surreptitiously thought of as an object in general. In this last case, the illusory idea generates two rather different ways of applying concepts "transcendentally."

The Transcendental Idea in the Paralogism

Thus far I have argued that Kant's criticisms of the particular metaphysical arguments issue from a certain conception of transcendental illusion that grounds metaphysical error. Taken in its most general form, the illusion refers to the adoption of the "supreme principle of pure reason," P_2 ("If the conditioned is given, the absolutely unconditioned is also given"). In relation to the paralogisms, this "illusion" may generally be said to generate the conviction that substantive claims may be made about the actual constitution of the transcendental subject; in accordance with this conviction, the rational psychologist argues for the substantiality, simplicity, personal identity, and independence of the soul.[1] To understand what Kant thinks is wrong with such an attempt, we may first consider his claim that there is a "transcendental ground" for the paralogistic inferences (A341/B399).

Kant consistently suggests that what distinguishes his "transcendental dialectic" from a mere identification of traditional error is its attempt to trace error back to its ground or source in the human mind. Again, I take this "transcendental ground" to be the transcendental and necessary (although illusory) principle P_2, in accordance with which we assume that the "unconditioned" that provides the ultimate explanation for things is given. With respect to the paralogisms, Kant wants to

1 It should be noted that the doctrine considered in the A edition version of the fourth paralogism is not the same as that considered in the B edition. Whereas the subject of the A edition is the ideality of outer appearances, the B edition is explicitly concerned with the independence of the soul from the body. Cf. A367–381; B409.

maintain that we are seeking the "unconditioned" in relation to a particular set of conditions. Kant's terminology on this score is particularly strained and dense. At one point, in speaking of the paralogisms, Kant states that we seek the "totality" of the "synthesis of the conditions of a thought in general" (A397). Elsewhere, he makes what is apparently this same point by claiming that the paralogisms are grounded in the attempt to represent the "unconditioned unity" of the "subjective conditions of representations in general" (A406/B433). Whereas both of these claims are formulated in what seem to be epistemological terms (the "totality" or "unconditioned" that we seek involves a unity of representations or thought), in another place Kant suggests that the unconditioned that corresponds to rational psychology is the "absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject itself" (A334/B391). The problem is that this last claim appears to be a straightforwardly metaphysical one about an existing being. Indeed, Kant himself suggests that this is precisely what is wrong with the rationalist doctrine of the soul.

Despite the terminological ambiguities, Kant's point is fairly simple. Given the subjective rational demand for complete unity of thought (P_1), we are required to seek some principle that provides the ultimate (explanatory) ground for our representations. We must do so in relation to each of the three "modes of thought" outlined in the Analytic: thought in general, empirical thought and pure thought (cf. A397).[2] Given Kant's "transcendental turn," the difference between these may be understood in terms of different sets of "epistemic conditions."[3] Hence, with respect to "thought in general" (that which is relevant to the paralogisms), Kant is concerned with those conditions under which any thought whatsoever is possible. Here, then, one abstracts from all content of thought (and so from any consideration of the particular mode in which the corresponding "objects" of thought are given).[4] Insofar as Kant claims to have shown in the Deduction that the transcen-

2 As we saw in Chapter 4, this grounds Kant's claim that there are three and only three ideas of reason. The common tendency is to reject Kant's claims on this score as being an offshoot of his adherence to a rigid and artificial architectonic. But it seems to me that Kant's position with respect to the ideas of reason follows rather naturally from the arguments of the Analytic. For a general discussion of this and related issues, see Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), esp. pp. 203–215.

3 The term is Henry E. Allison's. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), esp. pp. 10–34, 65–129.

4 This point is made in the Deduction. See B144–145.

dental unity of apperception is the condition for discursive thought in general, the "unconditioned" that we seek is that which grounds the possibility of any thought whatsoever; that is, we seek the unconditioned unity of apperception.

In this way, we have considered the problem of the unconditioned from a "subjective standpoint," as an attempt to locate the ultimate transcendental ground of a certain set of representations. We may, however, consider the problem "objectively" as well. Indeed, given the transcendental (necessary) status of P_2, we must do so. In this case, the unconditioned that we seek is assumed to obtain in the objects themselves. The objects corresponding to each mode of thought are epistemologically defined under the relevant epistemological conditions. So, for example, "phenomena" (the objects of empirical thought) are objects considered as given under the subjective conditions of space and time, whereas "noumena" (the "objects" of pure thought) are objects considered independently of these conditions. But since rational psychology is concerned with those conditions which make possible any thought whatsoever, it abstracts from all content of thought, and considers only the possibility of having representations in general. No particular "object" is given under the conditions under consideration; all that we are left with is the "I" of apperception, which serves as the ground for a series of fleeting inner representations. Nevertheless, the force of P_2 still remains. This fact grounds the attempt to consider the transcendental subject or the "I" as an object in relation to which we seek the unconditioned. Exactly this claim is made by Kant in a note assigned to the period between 1778 and 1779. In *Reflexion* 5553 he states that the first (i.e., the paralogistic) illusion takes "the unity of apperception, which is subjective," for the "unity of the subject as thing" (see 18:224).

Thus, we may distinguish between two different ways of considering the ideas of the "unconditioned": subjectively and objectively. Relevant here is Kant's own distinction between *conceptus ratiocinati,* rightly inferred concepts having objective validity, and *conceptus ratiocinantes,* pseudorational concepts (cf. A311/B368). Kant's point seems to be that our search for the unconditioned (according to P_1) generates certain ideas that (owing to P_2) must be taken to have objective, and not merely subjective, validity. Despite this, he claims that although the transcendental idea is, in accordance with the "laws of reason" (presumably P_1/P_2), a "quite necessary product of reason," we have and can have no concept of any *object* corresponding to it (A339/B397). Kant

puts this point in another way by claiming that although the transcendental ideas have transcendental or subjective reality, they lack "objective reality" (A339/B397).[5]

This suggests that the ideas themselves, when subjectively regarded as principles that ground our knowledge, are acceptable as such (indeed, for Kant, they are necessary), although when their meaning and use are misconstrued, and they are thought to furnish concepts of existing objects, they provide the grounds for error. Further, although when construed in the first way they carry with them a certain necessary *illusion* (according to which they are taken to be objectively valid), such illusion becomes *deceptive* only when construed in the second way (when they are taken to be objectively real; cf. A643/B671). Accordingly, Kant maintains that when the transcendental ideas are mistakenly held to allow of "constitutive employment" (and thus are thought to supply concepts of objects) they become "pseudo-rational, dialectical concepts" (A644/B672–A645/B673). We examine the positive, legitimate (i.e., regulative) use of both transcendental illusion and the ideas in Chapter 8. For the present, it suffices to note that Kant's view is that the improper (metaphysical or "constitutive") use of the ideas generates faulty metaphysics.

This view is implicit throughout Kant's criticisms of each of the metaphysical arguments. In the case of rational psychology, the paralogistic inferences are repeatedly criticized on the grounds that the idea of the unconditioned condition of thought in general (the "metaphysical self" or soul) is erroneously being taken to have objective reality. Here Kant's complaint is that we have and can have no concept of any *object* corresponding to such an idea.[6] Hence Kant suggests that the errors of the paralogisms result from the fact that even though the "I" is only the formal condition (expresses the logical unity of every thought) in which I abstract from all objects, it is nevertheless strangely represented as an object which I think (A398). Indeed, he claims that a "natural illusion" compels us to regard the apperceived unity of consciousness as an intuition of an object (A402). This view is also echoed in the claim, with respect to the paralogisms, that all illusion (*Schein*) consists in treating

5 At the passage cited (A339/B397) Kant claims that the transcendental (subjective) reality of the ideas depends on our having been led to them by a necessary syllogism (*Vernunftschluss*). Although Kant argues in the *Critique* that such ideas lack objective reality, it should be noted that he does claim that they acquire such (objective) reality in the practical sphere. See *Kritik der praktishen Vernunft,* 5:48.

6 This issue is discussed at length by Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 286–293.

"the subjective condition of thinking as being knowledge of the object" (A396–397).

Kant takes the illusion that "leads us to regard the unity in the synthesis of thoughts as a perceived unity in the subject of the thoughts" (A402) to be fundamental to the rational psychologist's project. This view is evident not only in the sections on the paralogisms, but in the *Prolegomena* as well. There Kant claims that the problem is that in the consciousness of ourselves we seem to be given a "substance in itself" in *immediate intuition* (*Proleg.* 4:333–334; 82).[7] Experience, he claims, seems to provide us with an immediate intuition of the "absolute subject itself" as object, and not merely with the "idea" of the "completeness in the reference of the given concepts as predicates to a subject" (ibid.). That Kant himself is said to have argued early in his career that we *do* have, in the case of the self, an intuitive insight into a substance in itself, suggests just how seriously he took this "illusion."[8] Although the arguments in the *Critique* must be seen as Kant's attempt to provide a corrective to this precritical position, he remains committed to the view that there is a natural and inevitable tendency to think ourselves as objects immediately given in experience. Again, this tendency is grounded in the necessity of taking the subjective conditions of our thought to be objectively valid.[9]

Some commentators have indeed acknowledged Kant's claim that the "illusion" in rational psychology is unavoidable, although, as Brook has noted, few have "ventured to speculate" on precisely what this is supposed to mean for Kant.[10] Moreover, it is common for those who do try to make sense of this topic to interpret Kant's claim about the illusion in *rational psychology* in such a way as renders it completely distinct from the more general theory of transcendental illusion in the Dialectic as a whole. This approach is taken by Brook himself, according to

7 Citations in English are to L. W. Beck's translation of the *Prolegomena* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950).

8 Kant is reported by Pölitz to have said this in his lectures (28:226). Karl Ameriks notes this point and briefly discusses it in *Kant's Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 31.

9 Along these lines, Andrew Brook has suggested that the illusion relevant to the paralogisms may be traced back to the subjective deduction, and the tendency to inflate certain features of apperception. See *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 181–183. It should be clear, however, from the preceding chapter that Kant's doctrine of illusion stands independent of the particular paralogistic errors and, moreover, that he takes the illusion and the idea of the soul to be necessary.

10 Brook, *Kant and the Mind,* p. 157.

whom the illusion in rational psychology consists in assuming that we can conclude something about the structure of the mind from features of both its functioning and our representation of it.[11] Although Kant argues that the illusion in rational psychology involves conflating certain features of apperception with "objective" metaphysical claims, it is important not to confuse this subreption with the transcendental illusion that grounds it.[12] For Kant introduces the doctrine of transcendental illusion in order to account for the errors or subreptions that take place not only in rational psychology but also in the fields of cosmology and theology. In this, the "illusion" of rational psychology is to be understood as merely one instantiation of the more general illusion that occurs as we adopt the illusory principle P_2 ("If the conditioned is given, the unconditioned is also given").

In taking this illusion to be unavoidable, however, Kant is *not* claiming that we are *necessarily* deceived by it, as shown by his own distinction between the *illusion* and the *deceptive inferences* of rational psychology. To be sure, in the paralogisms chapter, as well as in the *Inaugural Dissertation,* the "illusion" (here, in rational psychology) is said to *manifest itself* in a transcendental "subreption," referred to as the "subreption of the hypostatized consciousness [*apperceptionis substantiatae*]" (A402).[13] However, Kant clearly wishes to distinguish the "natural illusion" in rational psychology from the "logical" error that characterizes the subsequent paralogistic *inferences.* The latter, as we shall see, is articulated in terms of the transcendental misemployment of the categories (cf. A403).

Kant's characterization of the *logical fallacies* involved in the paralogistic syllogisms must be understood against this background, for it is presumably on the basis of this "illusion" that we then make the faulty syllogistic inferences of the paralogisms. Such inferences ultimately involve moving, at the behest of the rational requirement P_2, from a concept or rule of the understanding (the "I think")[14] to an idea of an unconditioned that obtains "objectively." Notice that the syllogistic inference involves concluding "from the transcendental concept of the

11 Ibid.

12 A discussion of the connection between Kant's theory of apperception and the account of the illusion in rational psychology that I offer here is provided in Camilla Serck-Hanssen's "Transcendental Apperception: A Study of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy and Idealism" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 1996), esp. chap. 5.

13 See Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* (*De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis,* 1770; 2:385–420), esp. sec. 5.

14 Kant explicitly refers to the "I think" as a transcendental concept in the beginning of the paralogisms chapter. See A342/B400.

subject [presumably the 'I' or the 'I think'], which contains nothing manifold, the absolute unity of this subject itself, of which I possess no concept whatsoever" (A340/B398).

In so doing, Kant claims, we slide from a legitimate transcendental principle to something else (the unconditioned unity of the thinking being) of which we "have no concept and to which (owing to an inevitable illusion), we ascribe objective reality" (A339/B397). Notice that the problem does not, strictly speaking, lie in the inference to the idea of the unconditioned in relation to the "unity of thought in general" (for we have already seen that Kant considers this idea to be a necessary one), but rather in the inference to the unconditioned unity of the *subject itself*. The question, then, is how the inference to this necessary idea (subjectively regarded as a maxim that guides our inquiries) is transmuted into a metaphysical claim about the "absolute unity of the subject itself." On this issue Kant is quite clear. Such an inference is drawn in conjunction with the subsequent attempt to "determine" a merely "pseudo-object" (the idea of the soul) through the pure categories: "Rational Psychology is based on a misunderstanding. The unity of consciousness, which underlies the categories, is mistaken for an intuition of the subject as object, and the category of substance is applied to it [*und darauf die Kategorie der Substanz angewandt*]" (B422).

I suggest that Kant wants to maintain that there are independent grounds for this last attempt that lie in the transcendental employment of the understanding and with it the conflation of appearances and things in themselves. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, this confusion of appearances and things in themselves broadly represents the adoption of the methodological position referred to as transcendental realism.[15] According to this, there is a failure to recognize that the only way in which objects can be given to us is under the subjective conditions of sensibility (space and time). Once again, as we saw in Chapter 3, this failure to take into consideration the restricted subjective conditions under which objects can be given leads to the conviction that we can make judgments about "objects" independently of the sensible conditions of space and time. Given this prior conflation, it is natural

15 For a discussion on the position of the transcendental realist, see Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* esp. pp.14–34. See also his "Kant's Refutation of Realism," *Dialectica* 30 (1976): 224–253. I am obviously indebted to Allison's entire account of the connection between the methodological standpoint of the transcendental realist and the conflation of appearances and thing in themselves. I differ from Allison, however, in distinguishing the methodological position of the transcendental realist from transcendental illusion.

that we assume (either implicitly or explicitly) that, in virtue of their subjective or logical necessity, various rational requirements (P_1/P_2) are extendable to these "objects."[16] (That is, there is in such a case no recognized constraint on the application of these necessary rational requirements.)

This reading seems to make sense of Kant's position with respect to the positive function of the principles and ideas of reason. Note first that although it may be necessary to adopt P_1/P_2, as well as the ideas that are generated therefrom, doing so is not by itself the cause of any deceptive inferences. The latter are made on the independent basis of a transcendental misapplication of the categories, a misapplication to which the transcendental realist inevitably falls victim. In undermining transcendental realism (or, correlatively, in establishing his own transcendental idealism), Kant takes himself to have opened up the possibility of criticizing the deceptive inferences in accordance with which the ideas are improperly construed, while at the same time allowing that such ideas themselves (as well as their illusory status) are subjectively necessary. Note also that such a position leaves the "transcendental status" of P_2 untouched. P_2 only requires the assumption of an unconditioned unity in the "objects" of our thought. This shifts the locus of error to the identification of something as an object. As we have seen, Kant's transcendental turn interprets such objects in terms of epistemic conditions; more specifically, it indicates that the conditions under which something becomes an object for us are themselves ultimately "subjective." The *failure* to recognize this (more generally, the failure to make, in addition to an empirical distinction, the *transcendental* distinction between appearances and things in themselves) commits one to the transcendentally realistic position according to which appearances are taken for things in themselves (cf. A45/B63). In such a case, the transcendental realist improperly applies the rational requirement (P_2) to fallacious objects, such as the "soul," rather than simply to the knowledge given through the real use of the understanding. Note finally that this reading is capable of accounting both for Kant's claim that the problem with the dialectical arguments is that they involve applying the rational requirement for systematic unity to "things in themselves" (A297/B354) and with his belief that the critical procedure of transcendental reflection can remedy such an error without, however, ridding us of the illusion that grounds it.

These results can be fairly easily applied to the paralogisms. Here,

16 Although P_2 asserts an objective necessity, the principle itself is subjectively necessary.

the failure to recognize that the only kind of object of inner sense that could be given to us must be given in accordance with the conditions of sensibility (as appearance) leads to the conviction that we can build up a rational psychology a priori. Kant characterizes the rational psychologist's position as follows:

> "I," as thinking, am an object of inner sense, called "soul." . . . Accordingly, the expression "I," as a thinking being, signifies the object of that psychology called the "rational doctrine of the soul" inasmuch as I am seeking to learn in regard to the soul nothing more than can be inferred, independently of all experience, from this concept "I" insofar as it is present in all thought. (A342/B200)

The problem is that once we abstract from the empirical content of inner sense, the only subject available to us is the "I" of apperception and this latter is not an *object* in any sense that would yield the rational psychologist's conclusions. Kant suggests that the rational psychologist's failure to draw the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves provides independent grounds for the paralogistic errors. Indeed, he claims that it is the fact that the psychologist takes appearances for things in themselves that "entangles" him in the "pseudo-rational speculations" characteristic of rational psychology (A380–381).

In sum, the paralogistic syllogisms are generated by reason's inherent demand for the unconditioned because the "transcendental concept" "I think" is erroneously taken to supply (by itself) a concept of an object (i.e., the soul), and the rational demand for complete or systematic unity of thought requires the assumption of a transcendental principle to which all objects must conform. To the extent that the transcendental subject is at the outset confused with an object given independently of the conditions of sensibility, concepts of the understanding are illicitly applied to it. On the basis of this conflation, reason then attempts to infer, by means of a necessary syllogism, the "absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject" (A334/B391). This illusion grounds each of the paralogistic inferences.

The Fallacy of the First Paralogism

We saw in the preceding section that Kant ultimately takes the formal fallacies of rational psychology to be grounded in a transcendental illusion. Although the errors of the paralogistic inferences are based on

such an illusion, they are nevertheless independently motivated by a transcendental misapplication of the categories. The latter, I contend, is not unavoidable but issues from a failure to draw the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Given this, we are now in a position to evaluate Kant's specific criticisms of the logical errors involved in the paralogisms.

Note first, however, that Kant's criticism is specifically identified as a "critical objection" (A389). Unlike either "sceptical" or "dogmatic" objections (each of which "alike lay claim to such insight into their object as is required to assert or deny something in regard to it"), a critical objection confines itself to pointing out that "in the making of the assertion something has been presupposed that is void and merely fictitious; and it thus overthrows the theory by removing its alleged foundation without claiming to establish anything that bears directly upon the constitution of the object" (A389).

Kant's criticism aims at showing that the paralogistic argument is based on something like a faulty assumption rather than, for example, that it contains material claims that are, strictly speaking, false. Note that the interpretation presented here is capable of accommodating and making sense of this feature of Kant's criticism. As we have seen, Kant's fundamental claim is that the paralogisms "presuppose" that the idea of the soul has objective reality or, equivalently, that it refers to a real object. It is only on the basis of this "illusion" that the rationalist's project of attempting to acquire knowledge of such an object is undertaken.

Kant's diagnosis of the fallacy of the paralogisms reflects this important point. He does not straightforwardly criticize the particular premises; indeed, he claims that taken individually, and properly understood, each of these may well be allowed to stand. The problem with the arguments of the paralogisms is instead said to involve the collective use of the various premises in each of the syllogistic inferences.[17] Although this position would seem to be a major stumbling block for interpreters of Kant's arguments,[18] I argue that it is central to his diagnosis of error.

17 I take it that something like this is Ameriks's point, when he says that "Kant himself does not object to the premisses, and their parts may be broken up into independent statements not meant to be derived (improperly) from each other"; see *Kant's Theory of Mind,* p. 68. I disagree with Ameriks's claim that this shows that the argument that Kant explicitly presents is not the object of his direct critique.

18 The problem seems to be that many commentators have difficulty reconciling Kant's charges of formal invalidity (understood as ambiguous middle) and his qualified en-

To understand this, we may consider more closely the first paralogism, which is supposed to reflect the rationalist's attempt to demonstrate the substantiality of the self or soul.[19] In the A edition Kant formulates the rational psychologist's argument as follows:

1 That the representation of which is the *absolute subject* of our judgments and cannot therefore be employed as determination of any other thing, is *substance.*
2 I, as thinking being, am the *absolute subject* of all my possible judgments and this representation of myself cannot be employed as determination of any other thing.
3 Therefore I, as thinking being (soul), am *substance.* (A349)

According to Kant, the fallacy involved in this syllogism is that of *ambiguous middle* (A403), which is characterized in the A edition as an equivocation in the meaning or use of the term "substance." Kant's complaint centers on the claim that whereas the major premise makes a merely "transcendental use" of the category, the minor premise and conclusion use the category "empirically" (A403). Kant's account of the ambiguity draws on the earlier rejection (in the Analytic) of any transcendental employment of the understanding. As we saw in Chapter 3, Kant's basic point is that the pure categories are to be regarded as principles of synthetic knowledge only insofar as these concepts can be applied to some given manifold of sensible intuition. Underlying this is, as we have seen, the principle that in the absence of any "schemata" subsumption of any real object under the pure concepts of the understanding is impossible. In abstracting from these conditions, the transcendental employment of the understanding erroneously deploys unschematized categories, for example, the concept of substance in premise 1, as principles from which material knowledge, for example, the actual substantiality of the soul in premise 3, may be deduced.

dorsement of the premises and/or conclusion. See Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology,* p.185; Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 72–78; Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind,* pp. 67–68. This difficulty, as we shall see, inclines interpreters either to reject the claim that the paralogisms are invalid or to reject Kant's diagnosis of the ambiguity.

19 In general, Kant's critique is most explicitly directed against the Cartesian doctrine of the soul, although it is commonly acknowledged that his criticisms also apply to the views of Leibniz and his followers. On this issue, see Margaret Wilson's article on the second paralogism, "Leibniz and Materialism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1974): 495–513.

Although this criticism is quite familiar, there are a number of problems with it. Kant offers a completely different diagnosis of the ambiguity in the B edition version of the first paralogism. Nevertheless, he argues in both editions that the fallacy of the paralogisms is a formal, not a material, one. This of course seems straightforwardly inconsistent both with the charge of *ambiguous middle* and with Kant's attempt to articulate the ambiguity in terms of a transcendental misemployment of the categories. To make matters worse, many interpreters assert that the syllogism as Kant formulates it here is formally valid. This last complaint is given a variety of (by now familiar) articulations. In his discussion of the first paralogism, for example, Bennett holds that the problem is not that the syllogism is *formally invalid,* but only that the rational psychologist "inflate[s] its conclusion in a certain way."[20] Similarly, Ameriks states that there is "nothing demonstrably invalid" with the argument as Kant presents it, and he thus maintains that the real focus of Kant's criticism is a different ("associated extended") invalid argument.[21] Not surprisingly, in both of these cases the denial of formal invalidity would seem to go hand in hand with a view about what is entailed by Kant's endorsement of the premises and conclusion.[22] Indeed, as Patricia Kitcher notes, Kant's endorsement of the minor premises and conclusions would seem to be the "crucial interpretive fact" about the chapter on the paralogisms.[23] To make sense of this fact requires coming to terms not only with Kant's claim that the argument is made invalid by an *ambiguous middle,* but also with his attempt to articulate this fallacy in terms of a transcendental misapplication of categories.

In relation to this, it should be noted that Kant is offering what would seem to be two rather different (albeit related) criticisms of the argument, each of which draws on a different sense of "formality." Although these two criticisms are indeed consistent, their unexplained juxtaposition in the text would seem to court possible confusion. The most commonly cited of Kant's objections is his claim that the problem with the syllogism is that its conclusion is arrived at fallaciously, *per sophisma figurae dictionis* (cf. B411). Here, of course, the claim that the error is a formal one simply refers to the supposed fact that the syllogism in ques-

20 Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 72. He presumably means by this not only that the premises are correct but also that their collective use in one syllogistic inference is unproblematic.

21 Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind,* p. 67.

22 Ibid., pp. 67–68; Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 72.

23 Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology,* p. 185.

tion is deductively invalid as a result of an ambiguous middle term. Thus, in the *Jasche Logic* a fallacious syllogism is essentially defined as one that is formally invalid, and a syllogism with *ambiguous middle* is offered as a primary example of such a paralogism (*Logic* 9:134–135; 138–139).[24]

Elsewhere, however, Kant suggests that the problem with the argument is that it involves a transcendental misemployment of the categories.[25] Whereas the preceding criticism clearly issues from considerations of "general logic," Kant's criticism here is more properly understood in terms of transcendental logic. An example of this kind of criticism is offered at A398, where Kant develops his claim that the error of the paralogism is a formal one. There Kant argues that the dialectical inference to the unconditioned condition of all thought in general does not commit a material error precisely because it abstracts from all "content or objects." Note, in line with this, that *any* erroneous (transcendental) application of pure concepts commits, on Kant's view, a *formal* error. Because such concepts, as concepts of objects in general, abstract from all matter or content of thought (see Chapter 3), their use does not, for Kant, involve any genuine (material) claim about any (real) object. Although it may seem strange to us to have the transcendental misapplication of the categories described as a formal error, it is perfectly consistent with Kant's claims. Recall Kant's repeated remarks to the effect that the transcendental concepts are erroneously deployed in their "logical guise" in cases of such a misapplication. Indeed, Kant takes himself to have already shown that independently of any sensible manifold, they are mere "logical forms of thought" (A244/B302–A245/B303).[26]

If we keep this in mind, then Kant's tendency to criticize the paralogisms (and indeed, *all* of the dialectical syllogisms) on the dual grounds

24 The English pagination is from J. Michael Young's translation in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Lectures on Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

25 See B410, where Kant claims that the problem is that the rational psychologist assumes that a priori synthetic propositions are applicable to "things in general and things in themselves."

26 This reading seems to coincide with Kant's distinction between the transcendental misapplication of the categories, and the transcendent employment of the ideas of reason. Both of these correspond to a particular kind of error or illusion. The former, logical illusion, is avoidable, whereas the latter, transcendental illusion, is not (A298/B355). Interestingly, at A297/B354 Kant explicitly identifies "logical illusion" with the "illusion of formal fallacies."

that they involve *ambiguous middle* and entail a transcendental misapplication of the pure concepts is more understandable. Kant's position is that *all* of the dialectical syllogisms are based on the attempt to acquire knowledge of things in general or things in themselves (e.g., the soul) simply through the pure concepts of the understanding (e.g., "substance"). On the one hand (and from the standpoint of general logic), such syllogisms can be shown to be deductively invalid because of an ambiguous middle term or, equivalently, use of a term. On the other hand (and from the standpoint of transcendental logic), the syllogisms can be shown to be "dialectical" because they entail a transcendental misapplication of thought.

Although these considerations may succeed in shedding light on the connection between Kant's charges of ambiguous middle and formal fallaciousness, as well as on his attempt to "flesh these out" in terms of a transcendental misapplication of concepts, this does not bring the matter to a close. For one thing, Kant's diagnosis of the ambiguity is still unclear. As we have seen, Kant claims in the first edition that the ambiguity centers on the term "substance." Despite this, the ambiguity would seem more properly located in the use of the phrase "absolute subject of judgements." Kant's position is that in the first instance (premise 1) the phrase is used transcendentally – that is, in abstraction from the conditions of our sensible intuition (space and time). Because of this, the definition of substance simply articulates the formal conditions under which any subsequent object, if given, could be considered to be a (i.e., could be subsumed under the category of) "substance." Note, however, that in order to be so given, any real object would further have to satisfy certain "sensible" conditions (permanence in time). This is just another way of saying that in order to be applied to any real object, the category of substance has to be "schematized." In relation to this, Kant sometimes suggests that the ambiguity comes in because the minor premise deploys the same phrase ("absolute subject of judgments") empirically – that is, in a way that presupposes that some object *has* been so given (cf. A403). Thus, his claim is that in applying the concept of substance to the "I," the rational psychologist is implicitly assuming that the "I" is an object that could be subsumed under the (schematized) category of substance.

What is most interesting about Kant's criticism, however, and what seems most to perplex his interpreters,[27] is that he appears to maintain

27 The minor premise (and particularly the first clause of this premise) is consistently cited

that there is another kind of ambiguity going on – one that does not simply trade in on the fact that the same term or phrase is being used differently in *different* premises, but which centers on a deeper ambiguity inherent in the minor premise itself. Kant's claim seems to be that the rational psychologist *appears* to succeed in deriving his metaphysical conclusions only because the minor premise lends itself to two very different interpretations. On the one hand, it appears to be a merely formal, and in this sense for Kant uncontroversial, claim about the transcendental status of the "I." Here the minor premise ("*I, as thinking being, am the absolute subject of all my possible judgments and this representation of myself cannot be employed as determination of any other thing*") may be understood to be a claim about the representation "I." As such, the premise asserts the necessary possibility of attaching the "I" or the "I think" to all my possible judgments, as well as the idea that this transcendental representation cannot be employed as determination of any other thing. In this, the minor premise simply reiterates the principle of apperception found in the first part of the B Deduction.[28] In line with this, the conclusion (that "'I' am substance") expresses what is for Kant a necessary, albeit subjective, condition of thought. Hence, to the extent that it is considered "formally" and is recognized to draw on the unschematized category of substance, the premise is fully endorsed by Kant.

On the other hand, the minor premise invites us to consider the "I" as an object. Here the minor premise may be understood to be a claim about the "thing" which thinks, that is, the "I" itself. As such, the premise asserts that the "I" is an absolute subject in the sense that it is the (unconditioned) *metaphysical* ground of thought. Although it may be natural, or unavoidable, that the *transcendental representation of the self* be taken for a *representation of a metaphysical self,* or *soul* (i.e., a thinking being in general), this confusion has disasterous consequences for the transcendental realist. Because he fails to draw the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves, the transcen-

in the secondary literature as a locus of difficulty. See Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind,* p. 68; Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Dialectic," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 4 (1975): 601–604; Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology,* pp. 185–187; Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* pp. 72–76.

28 See sections 15–21 (B130–146). Patricia Kitcher notes this fact and develops an argument according to which Kant's first paralogism is not a criticism of any of his rationalist predecessors, so much as it is against a possible misinterpretation of his own doctrines of apperception. See *Kant's Transcendental Psychology,* p. 192.

dental realist subsequently attempts to "determine" this "pseudo-object" through the category of substance. In this case, the conclusion (that *the I or the thinking being is substance*) expresses what is for Kant an objective condition, and it does so precisely because it claims to determine the *mode of existence* of a metaphysical object. Indeed, precisely this generates the foregoing charge that the minor premise uses the category of substance "empirically."

To understand Kant's account of the fallacy, then, we must go back to the doctrine of illusion, for the illusion (or the "transcendental ground") of the paralogism (the mistaking, under the guidance of P_2, of the "I" of apperception for an object) is manifested in the minor premise. The "illusory" nature of the second premise, I contend, provides the basis for the paralogistic fallacy. This point is clearly made in the *Prolegomena,* where Kant argues that the paralogistic idea "occasions by a very natural misunderstanding" the "specious" (paralogistic) argument. Insofar as he characterizes the "specious argument" as the attempt to infer the nature of the soul from the "supposed knowledge of the substance of our thinking being," I take it that Kant wants to maintain once again that the illusion is distinct from the fallacious inference.[29] In short, in attempting to *determine* (apply the category of substance to) the transcendental idea of the self implicit in the minor premise, the transcendental realist is presupposing that such an idea is not simply objectively valid but, indeed, that it is objectively real, and so that it refers to an object.

A basic exegetical problem related to the sections on the paralogisms centers on the fact that Kant seems to criticize the rational psychologist for conflating the "I" of apperception with different kinds of objects. On the one hand, he clearly argues that the problem is that the rational psychologist is taking the transcendental subject to be an object that is given somehow and can thus be known, independently of the sensible conditions of experience. To the extent that he does this, the rational psychologist is clearly taking the transcendental subject to be a *noumenal* object. On the other hand, the rational psychologist wants to attach predicates synthetically to the "I" in order to draw his conclusions. In this case (at least from a Kantian standpoint), he is implicitly assuming that the "I" is an object of sensible intuition (i.e., a phenomenal object). Given these criticisms, it is not surprising that commentators disagree over exactly how the paralogistic error should be characterized. Some

29 See *Proleg.* 4:333–334.

(e.g., Allison, Walker, Sellers) seem to take Kant's criticisms to be directed primarily against noumenal claims about the transcendental subject,[30] whereas others (e.g., Bennett) take Kant to be criticizing primarily phenomenal claims.[31]

Again, evidence for both of these positions can be found in the text. As we have seen, the paralogistic arguments are said to involve the erroneous attempt to deploy both transcendental and empirical premises (or, equivalently, uses of terms) in one argument. Such an attempt is ultimately based on a misconstrual of the transcendental subject. As Ameriks suggests, however, Kant rejects both of these identifications, and he does so on the grounds that the "I" is not an *object* of *any* sort.[32] In regard to this, it should be noted that it is only on the basis of the original illusion according to which the transcendental subject is taken to be an "object in general" that the rational psychologist then conflates the "I" with both a noumenal and a phenomenal object.[33] In fact, as I have argued, the failure to make the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves provides the basis for this subsequent ambiguity in his understanding and use of the "I." In revealing the underlying illusion, Kant can undermine the rationalist doctrine of the soul (more specifically, the argument for the soul's substantiality) without committing himself to either the claim that the "I" must be noumenal or to the claim that it must be phenomenal. This, of course, is precisely what a "critical objection" is supposed to do.

Given that recognition of this conflation of the "I" of apperception with an object is so essential to understanding the fallacious nature of the paralogistic syllogism, it is not surprising that Kant's reformulation

30 On this issue, Allison argues that the problem is that the rational psychologist conflates the empty or formal concept of a "subject in general" with the concept of a noumenal (in the positive sense) subject, or equivalently, that he "hypostatizes the merely logical or transcendental subject." See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 283. Like Sellers and Walker, then, he seems to take the paralogisms as challenging only noumenal claims about the transcendental subject. See Wilfred Sellers, "Metaphysics and the Concept of a Person," in *The Logical Way of Doing Things,* ed. Karel Lambert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 236–238; Ralph Walker, ed., *Kant,* p. 114.

31 Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 69.

32 Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind,* pp. 68–69.

33 At B427 Kant states that the dialectical illusion in rational psychology "arises from the confusion of an idea of reason – the idea of a pure intelligence – with the completely undetermined concept of a thinking being in general." Compare B429, where he argues that the transcendental subject is thought in the same way that any object in general is thought (i.e., in abstraction from any mode of intuition, be it empirical or intellectual).

of the argument in the second edition focuses on precisely this point. Indeed, his prefatory remarks there only serve to reiterate the claim that it is unacceptable to think of this "I" as an object given in either intellectual or empirical intuition. Consider the following:

> The following general remark may, at the outset, aid us in our scrutiny of this kind of argument. I do not know an object merely in that I think, but only insofar as I determine a given intuition with respect to the unity of consciousness in which all thought consists . . . I do not know myself through being conscious of myself as thinking, but only when I am conscious of the intuition of myself as determined with respect to the function of thought . . . *Modi* of self-consciousness in thought are not by themselves concepts of objects (categories), but are mere functions which do not give even myself as object. (B407)

> The analysis . . . of the consciousness of myself in thought in general, yields nothing whatsoever towards the knowledge of myself as object. The logical exposition of thought in general has been mistaken for a metaphysical determination of the object. (B409–410)

The B Edition

In the B edition, Kant characterizes the syllogism in question as follows:

1* *That which cannot be thought otherwise than as subject does not exist otherwise than as subject and is therefore substance.*
2* *A thinking being, considered merely as such, cannot be thought otherwise than as subject.*
3* *Therefore it exists only as subject, i.e., substance.* (B411)

As in the first edition, Kant claims that the problem with the paralogism is that it involves an *ambiguous middle.* Although Kant locates the ambiguity in the term "thought" in his discussion in the footnote at B412, it is clear that the ambiguity more properly rests in the fact that in the first two premises the "that" which cannot be "thought otherwise than as subject" signifies two different things.[34] According to Kant, in the major premise the rational psychologist is speaking of a being "that can be thought in general, in every relation," whereas in the minor

34 This point was suggested by Allison, according to whom the ambiguity is located in the whole expression: "That which cannot be thought otherwise than as subject." See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 284.

premise he is speaking of a being "only insofar as it regards itself, as subject, simply in the relation to thought and the unity of consciousness" (B411). In the major premise, then, the "that" which cannot be thought otherwise than as subject is an object in general. Given Kant's theory of knowledge, the only way in which one could generate a material (synthetic) claim from this transcendental premise would be to subsume an object of experience under the condition it expresses.[35] The "thinking being" in the minor premise, however, is not an object at all; rather, it is the omnipresent "I," which may always be represented as the subject of consciousness (B412n). In this latter premise, we explicitly abstract from all objects and consider only the relation between the subject and its thoughts.

To the extent that the "thinking being" of premise 2* is not an object that could be determined through the category of substance, the conclusion – that such a thinking being exists as substance – is clearly illicit. Hence, the paralogism is seen to involve a transcendental misapplication of the categories. More specifically, the argument attempts to deduce a material (synthetic) claim about an object from the formal or transcendental premise 2*. The judgmental error is brought about by a failure to acknowledge the conditions under which the categories may be applied to "objects." Such an error is itself grounded in an illusion according to which the subject in premise 2* is taken to be an object which provides the unconditioned (metaphysical) condition for all thought.

Although this characterization of the argument, as well as the diagnosis of the ambiguity, differs from that of the first edition, it is quite clear that the two formulations are complimentary. As we have already seen, the ambiguous use of "substance" reflects an underlying ambiguous construal of the subject. "Substance" is used ambiguously precisely because the "I" of apperception is smuggled in as object to which the categories may be synthetically attached. In explicitly revealing this un-

35 I thus disagree with Kitcher, who suggests that the major premise here is empirical. According to Kitcher, the position of the second edition represents a "reversal" of that which was offered in the first. Hence, she argues that Kant's diagnosis of the ambiguity in the first paralogism is inadequate, at least in part, because there is a confusion about exactly how the "transcendental-empirical mix-up occurs." See *Kant's Transcendental Psychology,* p. 184. It is clear, however, that Kant has not reversed his position on this issue; the major premise in both editions is transcendental (or involves a transcendental use of terms). That this is so in the second edition is made particularly clear from Kant's own discussion, for he argues that the major premise refers to a "being in general, in every relation" (B411–412).

derlying illusion in the second edition, Kant underscores the fact that it is impermissible to attach synthetically "substance" to the concept of a "thinking being, considered merely as such."

On the basis of the foregoing it is possible to reconstruct Kant's criticism of the argument in such a way as brings out the formally invalid move made by the rational psychologist.[36] Consider the following:

i	$(x)(Ox \rightarrow (Sx \rightarrow Ex))$	where, Ox:: x is an object of possible experience.
ii	Sa	Sx:: x cannot be thought otherwise than as subject.
iii	Ea	Ex:: x does not exist otherwise than as subject.

Here it is clear that the conditional "if x cannot be thought otherwise than as subject then x does not exist otherwise than as subject (i.e., substance)" follows if and only if x is an object of possible experience. Where x is not an object of possible experience, the conditional does not hold. Again, according to Kant, the "thinking being" of premise 2* is not an object of possible experience. Hence, it does not follow from the fact that the thinking being can only be thought as subject that it therefore exists only as substance. This formulation not only brings out the formally invalid move made by the rational psychologist, it also makes more explicit the connection between this move and the transcendental employment of the categories. Note that the formal invalidity arises precisely because or insofar as one is subsuming "a thinking being, considered merely as such" under the conditions expressed in the major premise despite the fact that such a being fails to satisfy the conditions that make such subsumption possible.

The Second and Third Paralogisms

Kant's diagnoses of the remaining paralogistic fallacies follow straightforwardly from what we have already seen. In fact, because Kant believes that the first paralogism exemplifies the error of each of the arguments

36 Strictly speaking, this formulation does not account for Kant's claim that the syllogism has four terms, but I take it that it is consistent with this claim. In accordance with this, there are really two separate (possible) syllogisms, one that is valid but "empty" (drawing consistently on the transcendental interpretation of terms), and another that is supposed to be materially informative but which is invalid. The formulation I am offering here articulates the invalid (second) possible syllogism.

to follow (A402; B411), he claims that each of these arguments follows the same pattern of error: whereas the major premises make a "merely transcendental" use of a particular concept, the minor premises and conclusions use the same concepts "empirically." Thus, each of the paralogisms is both formally invalid due to the ambiguous use of terms, and dialectical by virtue of a transcendental use of concepts. In what follows, I shall be primarily concerned to show that the interpretation offered in the case of the first paralogism is also capable of clarifying Kant's criticisms of the remaining paralogistic predicaments. Insofar as Kant himself altered and relocated the argument of the fourth paralogism in the B edition, I am not concerned with it here.[37]

The Second Paralogism. The second paralogism is supposed to reflect the rational psychologist's argument for the simplicity of the soul. Kant formulates the argument as follows:

1 That, the action of which can never be regarded as the concurrence of several things acting, is simple.
2 Now the soul, or thinking I, is such a being.
3 Therefore the soul (thinking I) is simple. (A352)

Note first that this syllogism represents what is for Kant the "official" attempt to deduce the simplicity of the soul a priori from general philosophical considerations. In response to this attempt, Kant offers a set of criticisms that are essentially in line with those criticisms of the fallacy of the first paralogism. As in the first paralogism, for example, Kant suggests that the syllogism is fallacious due to *ambiguous middle,* and hence seems to succeed only because of an equivocation in the use of terms. In the case at hand, Kant indicates that although the phrase "*that, the*

37 Although the same general pattern ostensibly holds for the argument of the fourth paralogism, the case for this is considerably more difficult to build. Much of the difficulty stems from the fact that Kant offers very different arguments in the two edition versions of the fourth paralogism. Unlike the first paralogism, the two editions offer criticisms of two completely different arguments. In the A edition Kant is clearly concerned with the status of our knowledge of the external world, whereas in the B edition the fourth paralogism reflects the rationalist (Cartesian) argument for the independence of the soul. I take the B edition to represent Kant's considered view. The problem here is that he does not offer a syllogistic formulation of the argument he intends to criticize. Although I do not argue for it here, I believe that a syllogistic rendering of the argument can be provided from what Kant does say, and that such an argument can be critiqued along the same lines as the others.

action of which can never be regarded as the concurrence of several things acting" is used "transcendentally" in the major premise, it is ambiguous in the minor premise. If construed transcendentally, it represents for Kant a purely formal claim. If it is construed empirically, however, it is problematic. In the latter case, it fuels the illicit conclusion that the soul itself exists as a simple being.

In the major premise, then, the "that" (the action of which can never be regarded as the concurrence of several things acting) is an object in general. Taken thus, this premise is not objectionable to Kant; it asserts merely that whenever the action of an "object" cannot be attributed to several things acting in concurrence, then the action in question must be attributed to a unitary (not a composite) being.[38] The problem with this syllogism has to do with the erroneous subsumption of the minor premise under this transcendental condition. The problem, as before, is that the soul or thinking "I" of the minor premise is not an object at all, and so one cannot deduce consequences about the "I" from principles that hold for "objects in general." The doctrine of illusion is thus again crucial to understanding Kant's criticism of this fallacy, because the illusory representation of the "I" as an object (under the guidance of P_2) is smuggled into the minor premise and grounds the illicit inference.

Despite these similarities to the analysis of the first paralogism, Kant takes the argument for the soul's simplicity to require extended consideration. Indeed, the inference of the second paralogism is said to be the "Achilles of all dialectical inferences in the pure doctrine of the soul" (A352), presumably because the simplicity of the thinking subject is taken by Kant himself to be firmly established, and also because the simplicity of the soul is crucial for securing the basis for its immortality and incorruptibility. Because we have strong practical interests in this regard, the speculative metaphysics of the soul is even more seductive. Unfortunately, Kant's discussion on this score is notoriously difficult to follow. This difficulty is well documented in the secondary literature, where one finds a variety of very different interpretations of Kant's position. One basic problem stems from the fact that, presumably in his efforts to clarify the preceding syllogism, Kant launches into a discussion

38 I disagree with Patricia Kitcher, who argues that Kant cannot and does not accept this principle. Her argument is that if the principle were accepted by Kant, then he would be committed to the possibility of deducing claims about the nature of the soul from the actions. This is not true. The principle holds only for "objects in general." Kant will deny that the soul is an object that could accord with the principle.

of issues that are obviously different from those just discussed. Not only has Kant's shift to a new line of argumentation fueled the patchwork interpretation of Kemp Smith, but it has given rise, it seems, to a contest to see who can find the most distinct arguments in the section on the second paralogism.[39] Regardless of this, Kant's central concern seems to be this: strong reasons lead us to accept the minor premise and its suggestion that the "soul" is in fact a special kind of being whose action (i.e., thought) cannot be regarded as the concurrence of several things acting. In order to examine these reasons, Kant introduces the second argument to which I already alluded, an essentially Leibnizian claim that it is impossible for thought to inhere in what is essentially composite.[40] Kant puts the argument for this claim as follows:

> For suppose it be the composite that thinks: then every part of it would be a part of the thought, and only all of them taken together would contain the whole thought. But this cannot be consistently maintained. For representations (for example, the single words of a verse), distributed among different beings, never make up a whole thought (a verse), and it is therefore impossible that a thought should inhere in what is essentially composite. It is therefore possible only in a single substance, which, not being an aggregate of many, is absolutely simple. (A352)

Kant rightly notes that the *nervus probandi* of the argument lies in the acceptance of the proposition that "if a multiplicity of representations are to form a single representation, they must be contained in the absolute unity of the thinking subject" (A352–353). Because this proposition plays a crucial role in grounding our acceptance of the minor premise, Kant gives it a rather extended treatment. Note first that Kant does not straightforwardly reject this proposition. In fact, the view that a single complex thought requires the absolute unity of the thinking subject is, properly construed, central to his doctrine of apperception. According to that doctrine, as we have seen, "all unification of representations demands unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them" (B137). The proposition, then, is compelling for Kant precisely because it seems to reiterate a point that is central to the doctrine of apperception. Because of this, Patricia Kitcher has argued that Kant fully endorses the proposition, as well as the minor premise of the syllogism that draws on it (*The soul, or thinking I, is a being the action of which can*

39 See Kemp Smith's *Commentary,* pp. 458–461.

40 Wilson has convincingly argued that Leibniz is at issue here. See "Leibniz and Materialism," pp. 495–513.

never be regarded as the concurrence of several things acting). According to her, Kant accepts the minor premise "insofar as it expresses the unity of apperception."[41] Kitcher understands this claim to mean the following:

> Thinking cannot be regarded as the concurrence of several distinct, unconnected things acting. Thought is possible only where synthetic connection allows the different parts of a thought to be united in a single thought, or representational state. He [Kant] expresses this point as the view that the "subjective I can never be divided and distributed" (A354). . . . Since the subjective I comprises the synthetic connections across cognitive states, it cannot be divided.[42]

Despite this, there are reasons to think that Kant does not consider the minor premise of the second paralogism to be exactly the same as the principle of apperception. For one thing, the principle of apperception is held, in the Deduction, to be an analytic principle. According to Kant, "This principle of the necessary unity of apperception is itself, indeed, an identical, and therefore analytic, proposition" (B135). In his discussion of the second paralogism, however, Kant denies that the proposition about the absolute unity of the thinking subject is analytic. Instead, and rather surprisingly, he claims that the actual simplicity of the self does *not follow* analytically from the unity of thought. In Kant's own words, "This much, then, is certain, that through the 'I,' I always entertain the thought of an absolute, but logical, unity of the subject (simplicity). It does not however follow that I thereby know the actual simplicity of my subject" (A356).

Insofar as Kant denies that the proposition in question is in any legitimate sense analytic, he cannot consistently be read to identify it with the deduction's putatively analytic principle of apperception. Given this, it is important to spell out just how and why Kant takes these two propositions to be different. The answer is that, unlike the principle of apperception, the proposition about the unity of the thinking subject in the paralogism is committed to a metaphysical claim about the self as object, whereas the principle of apperception is not.

Powell has suggested that this metaphysical committment is indicated by the use of the word "absolute."[43] On this reading, Kant is objecting to the rational psychologist's slide from a purely formal claim

41 Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, p. 201. 42 Ibid.

43 See C. Thomas Powell, *Kant's Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 96.

about how a thinking being must be represented to a metaphysical claim about what Powell calls the "self in itself."[44] According to Powell, the terms "essentially composite" and "absolutely simple" must refer to properties of things in themselves, and thus imply a metaphysical claim about the soul. This reading has a certain appeal. As we have seen, Kant would seem to be committed by his own doctrine of apperception to the proposition about the necessary unity of the thinking subject. Powell's suggestion, that the addition of the term "absolute" entails an objectionable reference to a metaphysical "self in itself," would seem to account for Kant's complaint in a way that leaves the acceptable, and analytic, status of the principle of apperception untouched. Moreover, such an interpretation certainly seems to score with the nature of Kant's overall critique, which focuses on the erroneous attempt to deduce metaphysical truths from formal principles.

Unfortunately, however, this interpretation is not sufficient to explain Kant's objection. It fails because Kant does not object to the use of the term "absolute," at least not in any unqualified way. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that "through the 'I,' I always entertain the thought of an absolute, but logical unity of the subject (simplicity)" (A356). Examples abound. As we have seen, in the first paralogism, for example, Kant endorses, in some sense, the claim that "I, as thinking being, am the absolute subject of all my possible judgments" (A349). These claims perhaps need some clarification. In book 1, section 2 of the Dialectic, Kant cautions against the misuse of the concept "Absolute," a concept he claims occupies much of the attention of reason (A324/B381). Kant's claim is that the term may be taken in one of two ways, either to refer to that which is true of a thing in itself (in its internal nature), or to indicate that something is valid in all respects. Kant claims that it is in the second, more general, sense that he deploys the term, which in turn suggests a distinction between a logical or formal claim and a metaphysical claim. Whereas the assertion that something is valid in all respects seems to be making a claim about the unrestricted nature of the assertion, the claim that something is true of a "thing in itself" suggests a metaphysics of the thing in question. Rather than the problem residing straightforwardly with the inference to any "absolute" unity of the subject, Kant's complaint is that the "absolute (logical) unity" is somehow being hypostatized into an assumption about the absolute (metaphysical) unity of the subject itself as object. So even if we

44 Ibid.

grant Powell's very uncontroversial claim that there is a slide to a metaphysics of the self, the question is, Why is this slide made?

Fortunately, all of these problems can be resolved by an appeal to the doctrine of illusion. Kant's general position is that the illusion manifests itself in the attempt to move from a transcendental concept (the I) to an idea of reason that represents the "absolute unconditioned unity of the conditions of thought in general." Because of this illusion, the absolute (unrestricted) and logical unity of the thinking subject (the "I") is hypostatized into the absolute and real unity of a metaphysical entity. Such hypostatization is undertaken under the guidance of P_2, in accordance with which a merely subjective condition of thought (the absolute unity of the logical thinking "I") is taken to be an objective condition of an object (the soul). This illusory idea of the soul, which Kant takes to be unavoidable, and even subjectively necessary, is clearly what is smuggled into the proposition under discussion. Moreover, this hypostatized version of the idea is implicit in the minor premise, where it functions as the transcendental ground for the erroneous inference to the simplicity of the soul. Kant's efforts to explain the attractiveness of the minor premise must be understood in conjunction with the theory of illusion that prevails throughout the Dialectic.

As in the first paralogism, then, the doctrine of illusion provides the framework within which we are to understand the logical error of the second paralogism. One way of looking at this error, as Kant himself stresses, is as an attempt to derive a material (metaphysical) claim from the general concept of simplicity. In order to derive any substantive claim, the concept would have to be deployed empirically. Such use, however, is preempted by the fact that no object is being supplied in the minor premise which could be subsumed under the condition expressed in the major premise. This fact eludes the rational psychologist because of the illusory nature of the minor premise.

The Third Paralogism. The argument for the numerical identity of the soul (i.e., the third paralogism) may be dealt with rather briefly, as it follows straightforwardly the pattern of the first paralogism. The syllogism in question is as follows:

1 That which is conscious of the numerical identity of itself at different times is insofar a *person*.
2 Now the soul is conscious, etc.
3 Therefore it is a person. (A362)

What we have seen in relation to the first two paralogisms suggests that Kant generally wants to argue as follows: the inference to personal identity is dialectical because it draws on the attempt to deduce a material claim about the "I" simply from a formal or transcendental premise. The false inference itself depends on the ambiguous use of terms. In the major premise the "that" which is conscious of the numerical identity of itself is an object in general. In order to deduce the metaphysical conclusion, however, the minor premise must be ambiguously interpreted in a metaphysical way (and hence be deploying an empirical use of the phrase). In this, however, the concept is erroneously applied to a fictitious object and is thus used independently of the sensible conditions that ground its real use. Underlying this transcendental misapplication of concepts is, of course, transcendental illusion, and the projected representation (idea) of the transcendental subject as a "something in general." Given this, the distinguishing issue of the third paralogism centers on Kant's critique of the minor premise. At issue is the claim that the "soul is conscious of the numerical identity of itself at different times." As in the two previous cases, the minor premise is endorsed by Kant and indeed reflects one of the central tenets of the doctrine of apperception. Once again, the problem occurs because the subjective condition of thought is hypostatized as an objective condition of the thinking thing.

Quite apart from the details of these arguments, the general lesson to be drawn from the paralogisms is that nothing substantive follows from the analysis of the subjective conditions of thinking. Indeed, that the philosophical psychologist believes himself capable of drawing substantive conclusions is a result of the illusion according to which these subjective conditions for thought are projected as objective conditions. That Kant ultimately depicts this illusion by analogy to mirror vision is, in the case of rational psychology, particularly apt, because the error involves "viewing" or adopting a perspective on the self, which is completely illusory. More specifically, it involves adopting the artificial perspective whereby the self becomes an object in the field of things about which we can acquire knowledge. That Kant takes this "perspective" to be at the foundation of rational psychology is abundantly clear throughout the sections on the paralogisms. It also accords with the earlier position of the *Dreams,* where Kant had first toyed with the problem of the doctrine of the spiritual being. With respect to the doctrine of this illusion, it is most interesting to note that although we can avoid drawing the fallacious inferences (that "I am a simple substance," etc.),

Kant's view is that we continue nevertheless to view ourselves as objects. In fact, Kant seems committed to the view that this objectifying tendency is inherent in reason itself, and indeed necessary. As we shall see in Chapter 8, Kant even wants to assign to the idea of the soul some necessity for theoretical inquiries in empirical psychology.

This last point again suggests that the impetus for drawing the metaphysical conclusions of rational psychology is not taken by Kant to be grounded simply or exclusively in a *psychological* tendency, or a proclivity toward cognitive "mix-ups," or judgmental errors. Indeed, in a decisive shift from the *Dreams,* Kant now seems to want to argue that we have deep theoretical aims that motivate and ground these errors. As I argue in Chapter 4, this reflects Kant's developing views on the function of reason as a prescriptive and guiding force in directing the theoretical and practical activities of the understanding. These theoretical aims or interests of reason are cataloged by Kant in conjunction with reason's ineluctable transcendental illusion, an illusion that is unavoidable precisely because it is necessary to secure the ultimate systematic unity of knowledge without which the understanding would be deprived of guidance and purpose. The interest of reason in securing such unity demands that we view the "I" as an object of speculative or theoretical inquiry. The necessity of doing so, moreover, makes the illusion persist even once we have eradicated the faulty judgments that have led us willingly to a metaphysics of the soul. If this is correct, then it clearly follows that the proper understanding of Kant's rejection of rational psychology must proceed from an appreciation for the doctrine of transcendental illusion. This is as true for the doctrines of rational cosmology and rational theology as it is here. The former is the focus of the next chapter.

6

RATIONAL COSMOLOGY AND THE PSEUDOEMPIRICAL IDEA OF THE WORLD

At A406/B433 Kant outlines the particular type of dialectical argument, one that has as its content "the unconditioned unity of the objective conditions in the field of appearance." Such an argument grounds what Kant calls the Antinomy of Pure Reason, and the problem is said to be that it commits the fallacy of the ambiguous middle (*sophisma figurae dictionis,* A500/B528). This suggestion may seem strange, for the antinomies, unlike the paralogisms and the ideal, are not supposed to offer us a clear case of formally invalid argumentation. After all, the defining characteristic of the antinomial conflict (and presumably that very aspect which roused Kant from his dogmatic slumber) is the successful nature of the cosmological arguments. Not only do they not suffer from any *internal* inconsistency but, according to Kant, each side to the various disputes succeeds in refuting the position of the other.[1]

Kant's account is complicated by the fact that he claims that the general conflict of reason with itself gives rise to two different sets of antinomial confrontations. Both the diagnoses of the errors and their resolutions differ in the two cases. The first set of confrontations are referred to as "mathematical" antinomies. As with all the antinomies, each of the conflicts articulates a debate between two historically opposed positions as regards the nature and constitution of the "world."[2] In the first an-

The material from the first part of this chapter appears, together with the discussion on the second antinomy, in "Transcendental Illusion and Transcendental Realism in Kant's Second Antinomy," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1998): 47–70.

1 *Proleg.* section 51, 4:340.

2 Sadik J. Al-Azm has successfully argued that the two positions are traceable back to the debate between Leibniz and Newton as articulated in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence (*The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972]). Although Al-Azm seems to argue for the very strong claim that the debate between Leib-

tinomy the finitude or infinitude of the sensible (i.e., spatiotemporal) world is at issue. The thesis position concludes that the world has a beginning in time and a limit in space, whereas the antithesis argues that the world is not so limited and is therefore infinite as regards both time and space. Continuing, in the second antinomy, which generally concerns the issue of divisibility, the thesis position contends that the world is composed of simple, indivisible parts, whereas the antithesis maintains that the world is composed of infinitely divisible parts. In each of these cases, the conflict is resolved by denying both assertions on the grounds that they are each based on a faulty assumption.

The second set of confrontations are referred to as the "dynamical" antinomies. In the first of these (the third antinomy), the thesis position asserts an uncaused (first) cause, whereas the antithesis asserts that everything has a cause. Finally, in the fourth antinomy, the argument for an absolutely necessary being is pitted against the denial that any such being is possible. In these last two cases, the resolution involves demonstrating that the two sides to the dispute are arguing at cross purposes (i.e., that there is no genuine conflict at all). On this account, then, the possibility that both sides might somehow be justified in their claims remains open.

Despite this variety of arguments, Kant's view is that all of these confrontations are merely manifestations of the (one) conflict of reason that arises whenever we try to think about the sensible world as a whole. Thus, as Heimsoeth has noted, the term "antinomy" appears throughout the text in the singular and refers generally to the problem of our reasoning when it is directed at the world.[3] Gottfried Martin similarly maintains that each of the antinomies is a manifestation of an underlying singular difficulty. According to him, the essential problem of the antinomies concerns the epistemological predicament that results from the denial of the theocentric model of knowledge.[4]

niz and Clarke was the (as it were, singular) source for the antinomial conflicts, it is quite clear that Kant viewed this debate as a manifestation of a deeper, more universal conflict of reason with itself. See G. Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science,* trans. P. G. Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955), pp. 42–64. Martin correctly notes the recurrence of such conflicts throughout the history of philosophy. More recently, Paul Guyer has noted that the problems of the antinomies were under consideration by Bayle and Hume as well. See *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 385.

3 Heinz Heimsoeth, *Tranzendentale Dialektik. Ein Commentar zu Kants Kritik d. reinen Vernunft,* vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), p. 199.

4 Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science,* esp. pp. 62–64.

Nevertheless, the view that the different antinomies represent one natural antithetic in a "four-fold conflict"[5] has been challenged. Bennett's attack is perhaps the most extreme on this score. According to him, the conflict or antinomy (singular) of reason is a "mirage" based on Kant's "bad" and "false" theory of reason's inherent tendency to error.[6] Details aside, Bennett's criticism draws attention to the difficulties many have found in making sense of the connection between the general theory of reason and the actual criticisms of the particular metaphysical arguments in the Dialectic. Bennett's criticism ultimately appears to reduce to a complaint about Kant's doctrine of illusion and the associated inevitability thesis. Although he finds it objectionable, Bennett correctly sees that Kant's claims about the "unity" of the different antinomial errors are ultimately tied up with this theory. Indeed, it is clear that Kant wants to use the doctrine of illusion and the associated inevitability thesis to account in a singular way for all the attempts of rational cosmology.

This suggests that it is helpful to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, *the antinomy* (which is characterized by a dialectical and, for Kant, invalid form of reasoning) and, on the other hand, the set of *particular cosmological arguments* or confrontations. Kant's claim is that the latter are grounded in the former. In what follows, I attempt to make clear how these two rather different accounts fit together in Kant's rejection of rational cosmology.

Transcendental Illusion and the Idea of the World

Before considering the cosmological arguments themselves, I propose to begin with an examination of the most general antinomial predicament. The first thing to note in examining "the" antinomy is that it is presented in conjunction with Kant's theory of reason and its inherent and inevitable illusion. Indeed, Kant wants to use the doctrine of illusion and the associated inevitability thesis to account in a singular way for all the attempts of rational cosmology. Once again, by Kant's "inevitability thesis" I mean the thesis that the errors of metaphysics are all

5 The phrase is Heimsoeth's; see *Transzendentale Dialektik. Ein Commentar zu Kants Kritik d. reinen Vernunft,* 2:215.

6 Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 114–115. For the best discussion on this, see Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Dialectic," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 4 (1975): 595–614.

grounded in an "inevitable," or "unavoidable" and necessary illusion.[7] Although Kant argues for this in connection with all of the disciplines of special metaphysics, it is particularly pronounced in his treatment of rational cosmology. With respect to rational cosmology, for example, Kant tells us that the antinomial conflicts

> involve no mere artificial illusion such as at once vanishes upon detection, but a natural and unavoidable illusion [*einen naturlichen und unvermeidlichen Schein*], which even after it has ceased to beguile still continues to delude [*täuscht*] though not to deceive [*betrügt*] us, and which though capable of being rendered harmless can never be eradicated. (A422/B450)

This "natural and inevitable illusion" refers to P_2 (i.e., the assumption that because the conditioned is given, the unconditioned is also given) (cf. A498/B526). Because of this, the influence of P_2 is most obvious in Kant's diagnosis of the antinomial conflict. As with the paralogisms and the ideal, Kant claims that each of the particular metaphysical arguments somehow presupposes a more general form of dialectical reasoning. In the paralogisms, this general form of dialectical reasoning was revealed in the first paralogism. In the case of the antinomial confrontations, the underlying (dialectical) reasoning is as follows:

i If the conditioned is given, the entire series of all conditions is likewise given.
ii Objects of the senses are given as conditioned.
iii Therefore, the entire series of all conditions of objects of the senses is already given. (cf. A498/B526)

As he had done in the first paralogism, Kant contends that the argument supporting this fundamental (dialectical) conclusion commits the fallacy of *ambiguous middle*. The major premise is said to use the term "the conditioned" transcendentally, whereas the minor premise uses the same term "empirically" (A500/B528). Thus, although the major premise makes an assertion that applies to objects specifically considered in abstraction from the particular sensible conditions of our intuitions (i.e., to objects in general), the minor premise must be taken to refer to objects considered under these subjective conditions (i.e., to appear-

7 For further discussion, see my "Illusion and Fallacy in Kant's First Paralogism," *Kant-Studien* 3 (1993): 257–282.

ances) if the conclusion is to be reached. The conclusion, once again, is that the entire series of all conditions of *appearances* is actually given. Put in other terms, the conclusion is that there is a world, understood as the sum total of all appearances and their conditions (A420/B448).

The idea of the world has a unique status in Kant's account. Unlike the "pseudorational" ideas of the soul and God, it is said to be a pseudoempirical concept. More specifically, the idea purports to refer to a supersensible but still empirical object (cf. A479/B509). Because of this, the idea itself is incoherent or self-contradictory. Moreover, this feature of the idea is taken by Kant to be unique to the antinomies. Recall that, in the case of the paralogisms, the soul is a pseudorational concept – that is, an idea of a noumenal object. The problem is not only that no actual object corresponds to such a concept, but also that the attempt to determine the mode of existence of such a "pseudo-object" involves misapplying the pure (unschematized) categories as if they were directly informative of real objects (i.e., empirically). But the idea of the world qua thing in itself is further complicated by the fact that it is supposed to be an empirical concept (i.e., it refers to the totality of the series of appearances, and expresses the condition under which we think "phenomena"). Because of this, Kant qualifies the sense in which the "world" is to be construed as an idea. In the *Prolegomena,* for example, Kant tells us that the representation of the world is *not* an idea in the strict sense that it represents an object that is *transcendent* (as presumably the ideas of the soul and God do), but only in the sense that it carries the thought of an immanent object beyond all possible experience.[8] This accords with Kant's well-known claim that reason demands the greatest extension of the concepts of the understanding, as well as with the earlier-discussed claim that reason compels the transcendental misapplication of the categories (A296/B353).

Kant is not arguing straightforwardly against the inference to the sum total of all appearances. Indeed, just as the representation of the totality of all representations in general (the soul) is subjectively necessary, the conception of a sum total of all empirical representation is for Kant a "necessary idea of reason."[9] Throughout the Dialectic, Kant tells us that this idea is generated by means of a necessary syllogism, and in the Appendix we find Kant arguing for its (subjective or regulative) necessity (cf. A669/B697; A671/B699). Rather, the idea of the world

8 *Proleg.* 4:337–338.

9 Cf. A324/B380; A328/B385; A671/B699. This list is not exhaustive.

becomes problematic only insofar as we assume it to be objectively real – to refer to a real object. Given this, it is not surprising that Kant criticizes rational cosmology on essentially the same grounds as he does rational psychology and rational theology, to wit: it involves the erroneous attempt to determine a merely "pseudo-object." Indeed, according to Kant, "as long as we persist in assuming that there is an actual object corresponding to the idea," the problem of the antinomy "allows of no solution" (A482/B510). Unlike the paralogisms and the ideal, however, at least part of the problem with the antinomies has to do with the aforementioned fact that the idea of the world is internally incoherent. Recall that, for Kant, rational cosmology is characterized as the attempt to find the unconditioned ground of empirical thought. Very generally, Kant's strategy is to argue that because of the transcendental status of P_2, we are constrained to take the ultimate subjective conditions of empirical *thought* to be objective conditions of objects themselves, and so form the idea of a superempirical object. The idea thus generated is that of the "world" – the sum of all appearances (cf. A420/B448).

Although the term "appearances" carries with it an epistemological reference (it refers to objects considered in relation to the subjective conditions of our sensible intuition), we have already seen that Kant wants to show how, in each case, the idea of the unconditioned gets transmuted into the thought of a metaphysical object. In the paralogisms, the demand for the unconditioned condition of thought in general has generated the idea of a subject in which all thought inheres. In attempting to determine this idea, the rational psychologist argued for the actual substantiality of a metaphysical (noumenal) self. Here, by contrast, Kant suggests that the demand for the unconditioned condition of empirical thought generates the idea of the sum of all appearances (the world). The problem is that, in attempting to determine this idea, the transcendental cosmologist is the unwitting victim of yet another projection according to which the conditions for human thought are held out as conditions for objects considered in all abstraction from the human mind.

Once again, the problem involves the illusion according to which the idea of the world is somehow taken to refer to a real object. In this connection, Kant clearly wants to distinguish between the idea per se (the rightly inferred and necessary idea of a totality of empirically given conditions) and the assumed representation of the sensible world as an empirically given whole in itself.[10] Whereas the inference to the idea is nec-

10 Relevant here is Kant's own distinction between *conceptus ratiocinati* (rightly inferred

essary, our attempts to draw metaphysical conclusions from it are grounded in an amphiboly. Thus, according to Kant, the rational cosmologist succumbs to "that amphiboly which transforms an Idea into a supposed representation of an object that is empirically given and known according to the laws of experience" (A484/B512).

This amphiboly is present in the foregoing dialectical syllogism. The first locus of difficulty concerns the major premise P_2, which is the transcendental principle that "if the conditioned is given the unconditioned is also given." As we have seen, this principle was first introduced in the beginning of the Dialectic and is consistently cited in connection with Kant's doctrine of transcendental illusion (A308/B356). According to that doctrine, reason is characterized by an inherent need to assume a metaphysical ground ("the unconditioned") in relation to which it would be at least theoretically possible to bring the knowledge of the understanding to completion. Because completeness and systematic unity of knowledge are subjectively necessary (they are interests and demands of reason), Kant frequently states the problem in terms of a conflation of a subjective or logical necessity with an objective or metaphysical necessity (A308/B365). For our present purposes it is enough to recall that this assumption of an unconditioned (this transcendental illusion) is both unavoidable and epistemologically necessary for Kant (cf. A645/B673).

In connection with the Antinomy of Pure Reason, then, the problem lies in the erroneous attempt to deduce knowledge about *appearances* (objects of experience) from this transcendental and illusory principle. On this point, Kant tells us that although the assumption of the unconditioned is crucial for theoretical inquiries into nature, the demand for systematic unity can only be used as a projected or rationally postulated goal for the *knowledge* given through the understanding (i.e., "regulatively"); its application to *objects* of the understanding (appearances) is illicit (A648/B676). Moreover, his complaint centers on the claim that the attempt to determine appearances themselves by subsuming these under the transcendental principle involves applying a principle of reason to appearances independently of those subjective conditions under which the understanding is bound to operate in relation to any such object (i.e., those of sensibility). To apply the principle in this way is thus tantamount to taking appearances for things in themselves. Once ap-

concepts having objective validity) and *conceptus ratiocinantes* (pseudorational concepts). See A311/B368.

pearances are taken for things in themselves, it is assumed that the entire set of all appearances (the world) is an object about which we can acquire knowledge through reason alone. Consider the following:

> No transcendental employment can be made of the pure concepts either of the understanding or reason; . . . the [assertion of] absolute totality of the series of conditions in the sensible world rests on a transcendental employment of reason in which reason demands this unconditioned completeness from what it assumes to be a thing in itself. (A516/B544)

This complaint is crucial to understanding the diagnosis of *ambiguous middle*. Kant's claim is that the minor premise (that "objects of the senses are given as conditioned") is erronously subsumed under the major premise precisely because it suffers from an amphiboly or ambiguity – in speaking of "objects of the senses," it fails to distinguish between appearances and things in themselves. Because the failure to distinguish between appearances and things in themselves is the defining characteristic of the transcendental realist, the metaphysician's transcendental realism engenders the ambiguity in question. If one returns to the dialectical syllogism, it is clear that the transcendental illusion expressed in premise 1 (P_2) brings about the fallacious inference only *given* the transcendentally realistic position of the metaphysical cosmologist.

In the antinomies chapter in particular, the distinction between the illusion and transcendental realism is sometimes blurred, and we find Kant referring to what Kemp Smith translates as the "illusion of transcendental realism" (A543/B571). These kinds of claims, in turn, have fueled the view that transcendental illusion is identical with transcendental realism, where the latter is broadly held to involve the conflation of appearances and things in themselves. In the passage cited, however – "Wenn wir der Täuschung des transzendentalen Realismus nachgeben wollen: so bleiebt weder Natur, noch Freiheit ubrig" – it is important to note the term used by Kant. The *Täuschung* or "deception" alluded to is best distinguished from the illusion *simpliciter* (*Illusion, Schein*) embodied in P_2. Indeed, given the official doctrine of transcendental illusion outlined in Chapter 4, it is clear that Kant's concern is in fact twofold: (1) Kant is interested in detailing a "natural" and "inevitable" illusion that can never cease to be (P_2), and (2) he is aiming to render the illusion "harmless." In connection with point 1 (broadly speaking, Kant's inevitability thesis) Kant hopes to pave the way for the arguments in the Appendix. There he maintains that the ideas of reason, and with them a certain transcendental illusion, play an essential epistemic (al-

beit merely regulative) role in human knowledge. In connection with point 2 Kant wants to undermine both the specific arguments or fallacies of transcendental cosmology and transcendental realism. Indeed, he wants to show that an otherwise useful and necessary assumption (the major premise P_2) generates error precisely on the condition that one is a transcendental realist.

Unfortunately, these two different aims of Kant are oftentimes confused, misrepresented, or dismissed by commentators in their discussions of the antinomies.[11] As we have already seen, Bennett simply dismisses Kant's attempt to situate each of the cosmological inferences in the context of a more general theory of reason and transcendental illusion. Moreover, Bennett is not alone in this tendency to reject or otherwise misinterpret both the distinction and the connection between points 1 and 2. Indeed, one sees it recurring in varying degrees in the commentaries of Kemp Smith, Walsh, Strawson, and Guyer.[12] In such

11 See Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason,"* 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), pp. 481–483; W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), pp. 207–214; P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 156–161. See also Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 385–412. In all of these works, it seems to me that there is a tendency to reject or otherwise misinterpret both the distinction and the connection between transcendental illusion and transcendental realism. This is also the case with Henry E. Allison, who traces transcendental illusion back to the adoption of the methodological standpoint of the transcendental realist. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 35–61. Essentially this same view is presented in his *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. p. 12.

12 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* pp. 481–483; Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* pp. 207–214; Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense,* pp. 156–161. Strawson primarily criticizes the notion that the two "dynamical antinomies" fit into the account of illusion. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* pp. 385–412. Guyer, it seems, takes these two aims of Kant's to be straightforwardly incompatible, for he suggests that the argument against transcendental realism is based on the implicit assumption that the ideas of reason are valid with respect to a particular set of noumenal (in the positive sense) objects. This kind of interpretation effectively undermines Kant's own (explicitly stated) attempts to demonstrate that the ideas of reason are, although indeed necessary, only subjectively so. It would further seem to fly in the face of Kant's view that these ideas have no objective reality. Indeed, on Guyer's interpretation it makes no sense for Kant to claim that the ideas lack objective reality, because they in fact *do* provide concepts of real (noumenal) objects. This, of course, is precisely what Kant denies with the doctrine of transcendental illusion. Guyer's interpretation really gets its momentum from the claim that Kant is committed to an *ontological* distinction between appearances and things in themselves and the correlated suggestion that the indirect proof for transcendental idealism presupposes that reason really does acquire knowledge of an ontologically distinct class of (noumenal) objects.

cases, Kant's position gets blurred by the failure to distinguish clearly between the theory of illusion and the criticism of the position referred to as "transcendental realism." Because the defining characteristic of transcendental realism is the conflation of appearances and things in themselves, it is often thought that the illusion that grounds all error consists simply in taking appearances for things in themselves. Allison's early view is representative of this interpretation. According to him, the illusion of rational cosmology is itself dependent on the adoption of the methodological standpoint of the transcendental realist. Simply put, his position is that the antinomial conflict arises just because the transcendental realist erroneously adopts the principle I have referred to as P_2. This he does, according to Allison, because he conflates appearances and things in themselves.[13] Although Kant might sometimes seem to encourage this kind of reading, he is clearly committed to the view that the ideas and the illusion that generates them have a necessary (regulative) positive function. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 4, the illusion (generally P_2) is said to be necessary and inevitable quite apart from the transcendental realist's conflation of appearances and things in themselves. Finally, this illusion provides the impetus to achieve the ideas of reason, which themselves have a positive function in Kant's transcendental epistemology. Given this, what is needed is an interpretation that is able to accommodate both Kant's attempt to link the antinomial conflicts up to a more general account of an unavoidable and necessary transcendental illusion, as well as with his attempt to provide an argument against transcendental realism.

Kant's attempt to undermine the position he refers to as "transcendental realism," in turn, draws heavily on his account of the conflicts in the first two (i.e., the mathematical) antinomies. Indeed, according to Kant the mathematical antinomies provide an indirect proof for transcendental idealism, for the conflicts in each of these cases are supposed to illuminate the disastrous consequences that befall anyone who mistakes appearances for things in themselves (A507/B535; cf. A491/B519–A497/B525). As a result, it is crucial to get clear about the nature of the conflicts in these first two antinomies, particularly if, as I have argued, the distinction between transcendental illusion and transcendental realism is essential to Kant's position. Without downplaying the historical and philosophical significance of the last two

13 See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 35–61. Essentially this same view is presented in his *Kant's Theory of Freedom;* see esp. p. 12.

(dynamical) antinomies, therefore, I focus most of my attention on the first two conflicts.

The Mathematical Antinomies

The first two antinomies are referred to as "mathematical" presumably because in both cases, we are arguing about the relation between, on the one hand, what are presumed to be sensible objects and, on the other, space and time. Moreover, because these two conflicts center on the way in which presumably sensible objects relate to the spatiotemporal framework, Kant argues that the conflict itself will be resolved once we successfully adopt the transcendentally idealistic position with respect to both appearances and space and time. We thus find what has come to be the notorious Kantian claim that the two mathematical antinomies provide an indirect proof for transcendental idealism (A507/B535). At the heart of this claim is the suggestion that so long as one fails to adopt transcendental idealism, both sides to the cosmological conflict remain equally justified.

It is common to view the cosmological conflicts in light of the historical debate between Leibniz and Newton, as it played out in the *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*. This in turn has led many commentators to assume that the thesis positions of the antinomies, particularly the two mathematical antinomies, clearly map onto the Newtonian views as articulated by Clarke, whereas the Antithesis positions reflect Leibniz's responses to Clarke. This view, which was perhaps most forcefully argued by Al-Azm, seems to be adopted in varying degrees by a number of authors, particularly in the Anglo-American tradition.[14] The alternative has traditionally been to take the thesis positions to be representative of a Leibnizian rationalism.[15] Without denying the importance of the Leibniz-Clarke debate for Kant's thought, too strong a reliance on that debate in interpreting Kant's arguments is clearly misleading, giving rise to a number of very serious misinterpretations of Kant's aims. Thus, contrary to the view of these commentators, I do not think that Kant is trying to present the singular position of one philosopher in the arguments; nor do I think this is a fruitful way of approaching Kant's antinomies.

14 See, e.g., Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 39–50; Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* p. 203.

15 See Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* p. 207.

In fact, any attempt to view the thesis and antithesis positions as either predominantly Leibnizian (rationalist) or Newtonian (empiricist) is wrongheaded. Kant is not pitting rationalism against empiricism, or Leibniz against Newton, in any straightforward way but is pitting ideas of reason, or ways of thinking unconditioned totality, against one another. As if to underscore this, Kant broadly identifies the thesis position with Plato, and the antithesis position with Epicurus (A471/B499). What is clearly relevant is that Plato presumes that the matter of being is logically independent of space-time, and thus sees the ultimate ground or explanation of phenomena as resting in a noumenal (nonspatiotemporal) realm. As Kant himself puts it, the thesis arguments are generally unified by their tendency to allow for "intelligible beginnings" (A466/B494). Indeed, it is because of this that Plato adopts the traditonal "two-worlds" view according to which reality is logically prior to the spatiotemporal realm of appearances. Against this, Epicurus denies the Platonic separation of reality into two worlds, arguing that reality is that which is given to sensation, in space and time. Epicurus, then, conceives of reality as coextensive with space-time. Kant of course had already criticized both of these general positions in the *Dreams of Spirit Seer,* and he takes up this problem again in the *Critique* (cf. A853/B882). The antinomial conflicts represent the opposed views on the nature of the connection between reality and space-time, with the thesis opting for a Platonic view, and the antithesis opting for the Epicurean view. The task, then, with respect to the mathematical antinomies, is to see why Kant would contend that, given the transcendentally realistic assumption that appearances are things in themselves, reason's demand for the unconditioned (P_2) inevitably generates two conflicting views (one broadly Platonic, one broadly Epicurean) about the relation between the sensible world and space and time.

The First Antinomy. In the first antinomy, Kant is concerned with the arguments for and against the claim that the world is limited in both space and time. The thesis argument contends that the world is limited, whereas the antithesis denies this. The conflict centers on the relation between the world and space-time, and not the nature of space and time themselves.[16] In this way, Kant is really pitting a conception of the sensible world in general against the conception of the world as coextensive with space and time. Moreover, as we shall see, this same kind of

16 Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 39.

conflict between objects of experience (composites) as independent of and as coextensive with space and time will characterize the second antinomial conflict. This fact will be crucial to understanding why Kant takes the two mathematical antinomies to provide an indirect argument for transcendental idealism. As we shall see, it is only on the assumption that appearances are things in themselves that the world (and objects in the world) must be viewed either as wholes given independent of space and time, or not so given. Kant's efforts, of course, will be directed toward showing that neither side to this dispute is correct.

THE THESIS. The thesis argument of the first antinomy is designed to show that "The world has a beginning in time, and is also limited as regards space" (A426/B454). I focus on the temporal portion of the argument. In order to show that the world has a beginning in time, the argument seeks to undermine the coherence of suggesting the opposite. Thus:

SHOW: The World has a beginning in time.
1 Assume the opposite: the world has no temporal beginning.
2 If (1), then up to every moment an eternity has already elapsed (i.e., there has already passed away in the world an infinite series of successive states).
3 (2) is internally inconsistent, for an infinite series is by definition a series that has no completion ["the infinity of a series can never be completed through successive synthesis"; A427/B455].
4 Therefore it is impossible for an infinite series to have already elapsed.
5 Therefore the series of past (already elapsed) events cannot be infinite.
6 Therefore, the past series is finite (the world has a beginning in time). (A426/B454)

Kant's statement of this argument has been subject to a number of criticisms. Most common is the general claim that he is illicitly taking the psychological impossibility of representing or confirming the infinitude of a series to show the real impossibility of such a series.[17] The problem stems, apparently, from Kant's suggestion that the impossibility of an infinite series is grounded in the fact that such a series can "never be completed through successive synthesis." With this reference

17 For good discussion, see ibid., pp. 40–42.

to synthesis, Kant is charged with erroneously deducing metaphysical conclusions from subjective, psychological, or epistemological premises. The problem, as Guyer puts it, is that "these arguments turn on purely epistemological conclusions, that is, on the claims that it is impossible to represent or, by means of sense, confirm the existence of infinite past time or infinite space. But from this it would follow that space and time cannot be infinite only if it is already assumed that only what can be decided or confirmed can possibly be so."[18]

Guyer's assumption is that the argument is supposed to show that space and time themselves are finite. This, it seems clear, is not Kant's intention, for the argument is quite clearly about the finitude or infinitude of the world in space and time. Even granting this, however, Guyer's charges of an illicit move from subjective to metaphysical claims reflect what many (including Kemp Smith and Russell) have taken to be an essential flaw in Kant's formulation of the argument.[19] Kant's reference to a "successive synthesis," however, need not be construed as appealing to a psychological process. Certainly the reference to succession should pose no problem given the fact that we are talking about a temporal series. Time, that is, is successive, and so the series of past events is a successive series. To take the past series in its totality, however, requires viewing it as a "set" or "collection" (a synthesis) of successive states. This, it could be argued, is not simply a claim about how we apprehend the set, but is supposed to reflect the conceptual terms in which traditional metaphysicians actually argued about the world itself. In line with this, one way of responding to these charges of subjectivism or psychologism has been offered by Allison. As Allison notes, the argument turns on a conceptual claim, not a claim about the conditions for confirming the infinitude of the series, or the psychological ability to comprehend the infinite.[20] According to Allison, the problem is rather that the rule or procedure for thinking the world as a whole that is composed of pregiven parts (i.e., as a *totum syntheticum*) "clashes with the rule or procedure for thinking an infinite quantity."[21] This is a crucial point, for it has already become clear in our examination of the idea of a "world" that Kant takes the traditional cosmological argu-

18 Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* p. 407.

19 The claim is supposed to be that in fact traditional metaphysicians did not move from conceptual or epistemological considerations or else that the argument about the world need not be dependent on such considerations. It seems to me that both of these are simply false.

20 Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 42–43. 21 Ibid.

ments to presuppose that the world is a totality or whole. At the heart of the thesis position is the suggestion that, to exist as such, a whole that is "already given" requires a completion of the process by which it has been given in its totality. This, indeed, is precisely what is actually concluded in the thesis: "A beginning of the world is a necessary condition of the existence of a world" (A427/B455).

Allison's solution, however, raises its own problem, as he himself notes. The problem is that the thesis argument presupposes that the series of past states must constitute a "totality." As Allison notes, this is tantamount to claiming that the (completed) temporal series constitutes a *totum syntheticum* (a whole composed of parts that are pregiven). Challenging this, Allison asks why we cannot simultaneously think of a series of past events or states that is infinite but not a totality. This question seems particularly compelling because, as we shall see, the antithesis conclusion suggests that we can and must think this way. Indeed, according to Kant, the antithesis shows that "the series *a parte priori* is without limits or beginning, i.e. is infinite and at the same time is given in its entirety" (cf. A418/B446). What Allison questions, then, is the alleged necessity of assuming that any totality of an infinite series must be based on there being a total or complete set of pregiven parts. Why, for example, couldn't we think of the total sum of past events as extending backward from the present without limit in the same way that we can think of the series of natural numbers, or the series of future events? In both of these cases, the series is bounded at one end, but nevertheless infinite. Indeed, Kant himself subsequently denies that the regressive temporal series is somehow completed.[22]

There are a number of ways of responding to Allison. Note first that Kant's own subsequent denial that the temporal series is complete is irrelevant here. The thesis argument is supposed to represent not Kant's own critical position, but rather one of two traditional positions about the world and its relation to space and time adopted by a transcendental realist. Given this, the question is why Kant thinks that, given the transcendentally realistic assumption that appearances are things in themselves, the thesis position has any force whatsoever. The short answer seems to be that if appearances are things in themselves, we are conceptually bound to conclude that the conditions necessary for their existence have already been met. Here, we again need to note the distinction between the illusion (P_2) and transcendental realism. Kant's

22 Ibid.

view is that the transcendental realist is committed to the actual existence of the totality of pregiven conditions precisely because of P_2. If we assume that appearances are things in themselves, which are already given, then we must (because of P_2) at the same time assume that the conditions that ground the possibility of the existence of such appearances are also already given.

Caution must be used when interpreting "Kant"'s position. We have already seen that Kant takes the principle that "if the conditioned is given the unconditioned is also given" to be not only rationally necessary but also illusory. The real problem, however, stems from the attempt to apply this principle to the world, understood as the sum total of appearances and their conditions. This last application, however, is undertaken only because appearances are taken to be things in themselves. Indeed, Kant goes so far as to state that *if* appearances *were* things in themselves, then we would be justified in applying P_2. This of course fuels Kant's own efforts to show that the antinomial conflict can only be resolved by adopting transcendental idealism.

These considerations immediately undermine Allison's attempt to liken the series of past events or states of the world to either the series of natural numbers or the series of future states. First, the series of natural numbers is not a series of states of the world and consequently is not assumed to be given (to exist) in the manner in which the states of the world do. Second, the progressive series is not at issue in this argument precisely because, as Kant himself notes, the existence of the present is not already conditioned by the future in the same way that it is by the past. What reason demands is the unconditioned with respect to the conditions of the "world," which is conceived to be *given already*. In the case at hand, reason demands that there be some first (temporal) beginning of the world.

It is important to see that the argument is for a first (temporal) beginning, and not for absolute space and time, and to guard ourselves against importing more into the thesis position than is warranted. As already noted, much has been made of the suggestion that the thesis argument is supposed to provide a restatement of Newton's position. Apparently, the reason for this stems from the fact that Newton had accepted the infinitude of (absolute) space and time as well as a determinate quantity of matter therein. Because the *antithesis* argument will criticize the attempt to show the finitude of the world by arguing that finitude presupposes (incoherently) premundane empty space and time, it is simply assumed that the thesis itself is actually arguing for

Newtonian absolute space and time. Great care must be taken in advancing this interpretation, however. First, there is absolutely no indication whatsoever that the thesis argument *takes itself* to be committed to absolute space and time.

The antithesis response does *charge* that the thesis must presuppose empty space and time if it is entitled to argue about a sensible (spatiotemporal) world. But this suggests that the problem with the thesis argument is that it doesn't adequately attend to the distinction between the (sensible) world in space and time and the (presumably sensible) world in general. Instead, the thesis argument attempts to deduce consequences about the world in space and time from fairly general intellectual considerations – that is, the impossibility of an infinite regress of states.[23] Thus, it could be argued that in taking the "world" to be given, the thesis argument conflates a sensible with an intelligible object (i.e., with an object in general). On the one hand, the world is held to be given as appearance. On the other, it is subjected to a principle that would only hold if appearances were things in themselves. In Kant's words, "if we represent everything exclusively through pure concepts of the understanding, and apart from the conditions of sensible intuition, we can indeed at once assert that for a given conditioned, the whole series of conditions subordinated to each other is likewise given. The former is only given through the latter" (A417/B444).

What we find in the thesis argument, then, is not the Newtonian claim that there must be absolute empty space-time, but the fairly general claim that some first beginning must be assumed in order to account for the existence of the world ("Also ist eine unendliche verflossene Weltreihe unmöglich, mithin ein Anfang der Welt eine notwendige Bedingung ihres Daseins"; A427/B456). The view that there must be some beginning of the world is, of course, accepted not only by Newton and Leibniz, but by a host of philosophers. Although Newton adopts a similar world view (a finite world in time), he does not argue in the way cited. Of course, a number of traditional arguments do move from the impossibility of an infinite regress of states to the necessity of a first beginning of the world, and the position of Aquinas is

23 Given the argument for the finitude of the world in time, Kant thinks that it follows that the world must also be limited in space. Briefly, the claim is that any attempt to view the world as unlimited in space requires the assumption that the temporal series of past events is also infinite. Because the latter is impossible, so is the former.

a classic example. Given this, the problem with the thesis argument is that it surreptitiously deduces a "first beginning" both of and as part of the temporal series from the conceptual incoherence of asserting that an "infinite series" in general could be given in its completeness. The problem is that any attempt to secure limits to the world in space and time entails thinking beyond those limits, and viewing the "world" as a thing in itself. Although this is the ineluctable function of reason, the antithesis will rightly note that any such attempt to set limits in space and time requires positing a premundane spatiotemporal framework. Because the latter is impossible, the world itself must be viewed as coextensive with space and time. The alternative problem with the antithesis, as we shall see presently, is that it posits this spatiotemporal framework as an ontological entity. This can be shown by considering the antithesis claims. Here again, I focus only on the temporal portion of the argument.

THE ANTITHESIS. The antithesis attempts to demonstrate the impossibility or absurdity of a finite cosmos by arguing that finitude presupposes premundane empty space and time, and the latter are incoherent. The temporal portion of the argument runs as follows:

SHOW: The World has no beginning in time.
1 Suppose the world has a beginning, i.e. its existence is preceded by a time in which the world is not.
2 If (1), then the world must come to be in empty time.
3 (2) is incoherent. If time is empty, then there is no particular time which possesses a distinguishing condition of existence rather than nonexistence.
4 Therefore the world cannot have a beginning in time.
5 Therefore the world is infinite in past time. (A428/B456)

Clearly, the third premise carries most of the weight of this argument. As it is usually understood, the third premise represents some kind of appeal to Leibnizian principles, either the principle of the identity of indiscernibles or of sufficient reason.[24] Understood in this way,

24 Commentators are divided on which they stress. Allison stresses the implicit reliance on the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (*Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 49). Guyer, on the other hand, suggests that Kant is appealing to the principle of sufficient reason (*Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* p. 408). In fact, the distinction here is not significant: in both cases the denial of a beginning in empty time resolves into the claim

the argument might be read as follows. Given that ostensibly different "moments" in empty time are qualitatively indistinguishable, there is no way of coherently asserting that the world comes to be in any particular "one" time, rather than another. As Allison notes, in such a case:

> There would be no conceivable empirical difference between a universe that came into being at an empty time t_1, and an otherwise identical universe that came into being at empty time t_2. . . . But if we cannot speak meaningfully of the world as coming into being at one particular moment of time rather than another, then we cannot speak meaningfully of it as coming into being in time at all.[25]

Allison's interpretation of the argument is based on the assumption that the antithesis is appealing specifically to a verificationist claim of the kind offered by Leibniz against Newton. There are many problems with this suggestion, but I shall not consider this issue fully here. Suffice it to say that, as Guyer has suggested, this interpretation does not appear to license the argument's ontological conclusion, for the fact that we cannot distinguish between a beginning at empty time t_1 as opposed to one at t_2 does not make impossible the beginning of the world in any empty time whatsoever. Perhaps a better way of understanding this premise, then, is to draw on Kant's suggestion that the world, as the "absolute" totality of all appearances, cannot coherently be asserted to bear any real relation to a framework of empty space-time. On the basis of this, one could argue that the supposition that the world comes to be in empty space-time is tantamount to the postulation of its beginning "ex nihilo." But the "nothing" in empty space or time would then contain no antecedent condition "out of which" an event or beginning (a change in state) could possibly take place. In Kant's words, an empty time would lack any "distinguishing condition of existence" (A428/B456). Consequently, we are required to assume that for any coming to be in time, there must be an antecedent state that provides

that the ostensibly different moments of empty time are qualitatively indistinguishable. The principle of sufficient reason comes in only to argue that in such a case, God would have no sufficient reason to create the world at one time rather than another. I thus agree with Strawson, who notes that the most that the argument shows is that if the world had a beginning, "then the question 'Why did it begin when it did rather than another time?' is unanswerable" (*The Bounds of Sense,* pp. 177–178). I also agree with Strawson that, taken thus, the argument is really quite weak (see p. 178). See also Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 49.

25 Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 46.

the condition of this coming to be. In this case, however, the world series must be construed to be coextensive with (infinite) past time.[26]

Kant himself tells us that the only way out of this impasse is to adopt a conception of the world as "non spatio-temporal" (A431/B459). Such an assumption (presumably characteristic of Leibniz), however, yields no conclusions about the sensible world (A433/B461). The problem with the antithesis is that space-time is now projected as an ontological condition for the being of an "absolute." In this, then, the antithesis position is, in its own right, committed to transcendental realism. This becomes particularly clear when we consider the fact that the antithesis assumes that whatever holds for the spatiotemporal world holds in general. What we see is the tension or conflict that arises from two alternative positions, given the transcendentally realistic assumptions that appearances are things in themselves. This same tension emerges in the second antinomy, which is concerned with the problem of the divisibility of substance.

The interpretation offered here seems to have an obvious shortcoming. I am clearly suggesting that what Kant is doing is pitting the attempt to comprehend things through the abstract use of the understanding against the attempt to do so in accordance with the principles of sensibility. It could be argued that on this reading Kant is not entitled to claim that there is any genuine conflict at all, for the thesis argument is concerned with thinking the world "in general," whereas the antithesis is more specifically concerned with the world understood as spatiotemporal object. Herein lies the problem: how can there be a conflict between two parties who are arguing about entirely different things?

I believe that the resources for this kind of objection have been most forcefully presented by Guyer.[27] Guyer distinguishes between Kant's early position with respect to the antinomies (that offered in the *Inaugural Dissertation* and in many of Kant's notes) and the later position offered in the *Critique*.[28] He recognizes that in the earlier views, Kant's

26 It goes without saying that this line of argument needs a *great deal* more development and support than I am currently providing. At this point, I offer this as a preliminary suggestion in order to move on to other, more pressing, issues.

27 In what follows I am drawing on Guyer's discussion (*Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*) of the development of the theory of the antinomy of reason. I do so because it seems to me that his discussion poses problems for the line of argumentation I am presenting here. I do not, however, wish to suggest that Guyer explicitly argues this point.

28 Ibid., chap. 18, esp. pp. 385–401.

approach to the antinomial disputes is "purely methodological."[29] Essentially, Kant juxtaposes the demands or principles of the pure intellect against the principles for the expositions of objects in space and time, and argues against conflating these principles. In the *Dissertation,* for example, Kant cautions against confusing the legitimate demand of reason for a limit to the world with any sensory representation of such a limit (a determinate beginning in time) (*Diss.* 2:415). In short, Kant warns us about the seductive nature of the "subreptic axioms" detailed in Chapter 2. As Guyer points out, here, and in the series of *Reflexionen* following the *Dissertation,* Kant's efforts are directed toward distinguishing between these two separate kinds of principles and assigning to each of them a proper function. Indeed, Kant seems to be committed to the view that the different sets of principles are compatible precisely because they aim to do very different kinds of things. In sum, there is it seems no real "conflict" between these principles after all! This last line of argument is most clearly evidenced in the notes stemming from the period between the *Dissertation* and the *Critique.* Recurrent throughout is the suggestion that the deliverances of reason are "subjectively necessary" as principles for the use of reason in connection with the "whole of knowledge" (*R* 4759, 17:709–710). Quite separate from this, the principles stemming from sensibility (and understanding) are said to have a role to play in the actual knowledge of objects of experience.

What is striking in Guyer's account is the fact that he wants to draw a radical distinction between these early positions and the critical position of the Dialectic. This is perhaps a function of his "ontological" reading of the *Critique*'s transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Guyer's view is that the transcendental distinction amounts to a division between different kinds of real entities, with the one kind being known through reason, and the other in accordance with the principles of sensibility. Consequently, he takes Kant to have moved from the early view that reason's principles are merely subjectively necessary (having a role to play in the development of knowledge as a systematic whole) to another view in which reason is alleged to yield a "theoretical insight into (a knowledge of) noumenal objects."[30]

Against this, I am suggesting that the "methodological" treatment of the antinomies that is sketched out in the early notes is carried forward into the *Critique.* I also argue for a theory that reflects Kant's earlier

29 Ibid., p. 390. 30 Ibid., p. 395.

views about the theoretical function of reason as one that is only subjectively necessary in connection with the "form of a whole of knowledge" (cf. A646/B674). As discussed in Chapter 8, I believe that this reading is confirmed in the *Critique* by Kant's repeated references to the ideas and principles of reason as "subjective," "subjectively necessary," "subjectively valid," "subjective laws," and so on. But if I am right, then surely Guyer's account of these early writings must pose a challenge for my interpretation of the antinomies, for it seems that there then can be no real conflict at work in the antinomies after all. If this is so, then Kant's efforts to have isolated a genuine conflict of reason with itself and, indeed, his use of this conflict as further proof for his own transcendental idealism amount to a rather grandiose inflation of a mere "tension" between different (ultimately compatible) tendencies of our thinking, and it really proves nothing of substance beyond this.

In response to this problem, it is important to note that the compatibility of these different tendencies only becomes clear from the perspective of transcendental idealism. More specifically, the conflict between the thesis and antithesis arguments only holds, on Kant's view, given the transcendentally realistic position of the rational cosmologist. In this, it seems clear that the early view, that error comes about because we conflate different kinds of "cognitions," is quite alive in the *Critique*. As I have argued, it provides the basis for Kant's theory of judgmental error. As the previous examination of the paralogisms reveals, I take this theory of judgmental error to be crucial to Kant's resolution of the dialectical inferences of metaphysics. In a very real sense, then, what Kant is offering us in the *Critique* is a methodological procedure for avoiding the errors stemming from the illicit extension of concepts and principles beyond the domain of their proper employment.

Here again, however, the distinction between transcendental illusion and transcendental realism is crucial. It is central to the interpretation offered here that the "unceasing illusion" be distinguished from the methodological position of the transcendental realist and that the resolution to the (merely apparent) antinomial conflicts goes hand in hand with the adoption of transcendental idealism. This, however, is not to say that the illusion itself, and therefore the subjective necessity of the principles and ideas of reason, also vanishes. What *does* vanish, nevertheless, is the assumption that these necessary principles of reason are constitutive of objects of experience (or, contra Guyer, any other objects). Until, that is, one adopts transcendental idealism, one is left with the "conflict" generated by the need to accommodate not

only the principles enumerated in connection with sensibility but, simultaneously, those of reason. Insofar as one assumes a transcendentally realistic framework, of course, the two sets of principles compete for application in the same domain. In the case of the first antinomy, Kant tells us, this battle over the same domain is evidenced by the fact that both sides to the dispute accept the disjunctive proposition that the "world" is either finite or infinite. As Kant himself argues, this proposition is only accepted because appearances are erroneously taken to be things in themselves. This claim, that the conflict between the thesis and antithesis is genuine only given the assumption that appearances are things in themselves, becomes clearer in our treatment of the second antinomy. Because I take it to be illuminating with respect to Kant's more general position, I consider the second antinomy in some detail.

The Second Antinomy. With respect to the divisibility of substance, the thesis argument concludes that there must be simple substance, whereas the antithesis argues for the infinite divisibility of material substance. In this way, Kant pits a conception of composite substance in general against a conception of any composite that occupies space. Thus, although the conflict centers on the notion of composite substance, the opposition between the two disputants really resides here, as in the first antinomy, in their competing conceptions of the relation between an ostensibly sensible object and space-time.[31] The thesis position proceeds with a conception of composite substantiality which is prior to or abstracted from space, whereas the antithesis proceeds with a conception of substance as necessarily occupying (or conditioned by) space.

THE THESIS. The argument for the thesis may be summarized as follows:

SHOW: Every composite substance in the world is made up of simple parts, and nothing exists but the simple or what is made of the simple.

1 Suppose composite substances are *not* made up of simple parts.
2 If (1) then if we remove in thought all composition, nothing is left. Hence no substance is ever given.

31 In the first antinomy the dispute concerns the relation between the world and space-time as well. For a discussion of this point, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 39.

3 (2) is non-sensical, so either (a) it is impossible to remove in thought all composition, or (b) after we do, there must be something that remains (the simple) (i.e. (1) is false).
4 If (a) then we end up with an irreducible composite, and so "being composite" is not an accidental relation, but a necessary property of the composite. This however would not be a composite of substances, and so contradicts the assumption that we are talking about composite substance. So not (a).
5 Therefore (b).
6 Therefore all things in the world are (ultimately) simple beings, and composition is merely an external state of these. (A434/B462–A436/B464)

The argument of the thesis clearly gets its momentum from steps 2–4.[32] To summarize, on the assumption that composites are not made up of simple parts, the removal of all composition in thought leaves us with nothing whatsoever existing. Because this is unacceptable, our only alternative is either to admit some simple or to deny that it is possible to remove in thought all composition. If we opt for the latter, we are left with an irreducible composite. The problem is that the very con-

32 As Guyer notes, the argument seems to turn on a "thought experiment," i.e., the possibility of removing composition in thought. In order to establish the falsity of the antithesis, Guyer claims, the argument must assume that the process of decomposition in thought is necessarily a process that reaches a termination, and that this process necessarily "represents an actual state of affairs." See *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* p. 410. Thus, according to Guyer, the argument really turns on an epistemological assumption (p. 409). The fact that the argument moves from considerations of conceivability to metaphysical conclusions should not be surprising, however, given Kant's attempt to represent a dogmatic, metaphysical position. After all, the recurrent criticism of metaphysics is that it attempts to deduce truths about actuality (actual objects) from general or formal considerations. Even so, Guyer's suggestion that the argument assumes that the conceptual process of decomposition must terminate might mislead us. For one thing, he seems to understand by "decomposition" not the intellectual act of abstracting from all composition, but rather an actual psychological process of reaching the end of all division in the things themselves. Although Guyer is not explicit on this point, he suggests that the real problem with an irreducible composite is, for the dogmatic metaphysican, that its infinite divisibility cannot be confirmed by the senses. As such, Guyer suggests that the thesis argument can only set limits on what is empirically decidable (p. 410). I do not think this is either Kant's point or the concern of the dogmatic metaphysician whose position is expressed in the thesis argument. More specifically, the problem with an irreducible composite is not that the existence of the simple could not be verified empirically. The proponent of the thesis argument readily admits this. The problem is rather that the very concept of a composite Being commits us to the existence of the simple.

ception of something that is irreducibly composite is necessarily not a conception of a *substantial* composite. Here, the thesis argument turns on the traditional conception of substance as self-subsistent being, or that which exists in itself. The claim is that any irreducibly composite thing cannot be a substantial composite, because any composite made up of substances is *ex hypothesi* reducible to the individual self-subsistent beings that collectively "make it up" and would persist throughout all changes in composition. Thus, the necessity of simple substances is thought to follow fairly directly by intellectual argument simply from the definition of a composite. Accordingly, "composition" is conceived to be an accidental and external relation that holds between and presupposes self-subsisting substances. Thus, Kant tells us, the rational inference from the existence of any composite to the existence of the simple applies only to substantial wholes, which are composite in the strict sense that their unification is an accidental property of the individual self-subsistent entities (A442/B470).

This last point highlights two basic and related exegetical issues, which must be resolved in order to understand the way in which the cosmologist's transcendental realism generates errors in accordance with P_2. The first concerns the nature of the composite substance that is in question in the second antinomy. The second has to do with the kind of "simple" being defended. The fact that Kant is making some assumptions about both the composite and the simple is clear throughout the thesis and the observation on the thesis. We are told, for example, that the thesis only concerns *composita* – that is, wholes the possibility of which are grounded in the existence of *self-subsisting parts* (cf. A438/B466–A440/B468). Although this suggests that Kant wants to identify the *compositum* in question with a *totum syntheticum* of some kind, Kant is not here talking about the world.[33] Unlike the world, which Kant refers to as "*the [des]* given whole of all appearances," the second antinomy is concerned with "*a [eines]* given whole in the field of appearance" (A416/B443). This indicates from the very outset that Kant is concerned with composites in the world, and not, as in the first antinomy, with the world itself. Again, unlike the "world," which is a mere idea of reason, objects of experience are actually *given* as aggregates in intuition. Despite this, the parts themselves under consideration (the simples) are simples "necessarily given in the composite"

33 See *R* 3789 (17:293). There Kant identifies *composita* with *tota synthetica* and claims that bodies are *synthetica* ("Spatium und tempus sind tota analytica, die corper synthetica").

(A442/B470). This last passage underscores the fact that what are supposed to be at issue are appearances. Because of this, Kant claims that a Leibnizian monad properly construed is *not* at issue in the thesis argument. Because the monad taken in this last sense refers to that which is immediately given as simple (in self-consciousness), mental substances are presumably excluded from the discussion. And, indeed, the topics of both the substantiality and the simplicity of the soul are officially reserved for rational psychology.[34]

These claims have provided grounds for a number of misconstruals of Kant's argument in the thesis. More specifically, Kant's denial that Leibnizian monads properly construed are at issue has led many to conclude that the thesis is rather specifically concerned with extended or material composite substance. It has also generated support for another view, which is that the "simple" elements urged by the thesis are Newtonian particles of matter. In discussing each of these claims in turn, I argue that both are misleading, because they share the common and erroneous assumption that the substance under consideration is spatially located.

THE COMPOSITE SUBSTANCE. One of the greatest obstacles to understanding the thesis argument resides in the conception of composite substantiality. Many interpreters of Kant's argument again assume that the composite in question is extended (material) substance.[35] There is much to recommend this view. After all, the antinomy is about composites "in the world," and Kant's oft-repeated assertions that the cosmological conflicts concern "appearances" or the "sum total of appearances and their conditions" lends credence to the suggestion that we are dealing with objects of the senses (i.e., material objects). Moreover, the fact that Kant excludes Leibnizian monads (souls) suggests that the topic under discussion is not immaterial, but rather material (extended) substance. Accordingly, the thesis is typically read to be arguing that compound substance (understood here exclusively as extended substance, or matter) is composed of simple elements. Problems immediately arise from this assumption, however. Kemp Smith, who argues for this reading, puts the problem as follows: Kant, he says,

34 This claim needs some qualification. It must be noted that there is clearly some anticipation of the paralogistic arguments in the second antinomy, especially in the discussion of the antithesis and the Observation on the Thesis. See, e.g., A443/B471. Despite this, I take the second antinomy to be essentially about simple substances other than the soul.

35 Specific examples will be provided later.

begs the question by illegitimately assuming a definition of extended matter as composite substance. Such an assumption, because committed to the notion that composition is not essential to matter, surreptitiously introduces a Leibnizian metaphysics into what should properly be a discussion of matter.[36] Kemp Smith's charge is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's. According to the latter,

> In the second conflict the thesis is at once guilty of a very palpable *petitio principii,* for it commences "Every compound substance consists of simple parts." From the compoundness arbitrarily assumed, no doubt it afterwards very easily proves the simple parts. But the proposition "All matter is compound," which is just the point, remains unproved, because it is simply a groundless assumption.[37]

Common to both Kemp Smith and Schopenhauer is the view that the thesis is concerned to demonstrate that extended substance (substance in space) is composed of simple elements. Moreover, this view is not uncommon; it dominates the interpretations of a number of commentators.[38] The problem with this reading, however, is that Kant nowhere in the thesis argument refers to either "matter" or "extension," reserving his comments instead for the "composite" (*Kompositum*), "composite substance" (*zusammengesetzte Substanz*), "substance," or "substantial whole" (*substantielles Ganzes*). Although Kant does not explicitly refer to extended substance, it appears that many commentators feel that he is committed to a position about matter, if the thesis and antithesis arguments are genuinely to conflict. More particularly, if the antithesis argument is about extended substance or matter (and we shall see that it is), then the thesis argument must be about the same topic if there is to be an antinomial confrontation.

Such an assumption, however, entirely misses the point, which is that the thesis argument operates with a rational conception of composite

36 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 489.

37 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea,* vol. 2, trans. R. B. Haldane and John Kemp (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), p. 110.

38 See, e.g., James Van Cleve, "Reflections on Kant's Second Antinomy," *Synthese* 47 (1981): 481–494. See also Al-Azm, who argues that the thesis "deals only with the composition of space-occupying matter" (*The Origin of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies,* p. 50). Although Al-Azm makes this point in order to emphasize that the argument is about substance in space and not space itself, we shall see that it leads to a number of difficulties in his position.

substance *in general,* which abstracts from any necessary connection to space. Thus, the thesis position here bears a crucial resemblance to the thesis of the first antinomy; in both cases, the proponent of the argument focuses on purely conceptual considerations that abstract from the sensible conditions of space and time and is, in this sense, assuming a Platonic model of the connection between being and space-time. In the second antinomy, it is precisely this assumption that substance is independent of (or logically prior to) space that is criticized in the antithesis argument. There Kant claims that the argument against infinite divisibility offered by the "monadists" follows from the failure to see that space is the condition of the possibility of objects of the senses (i.e., bodies) (A442/B470).

With this in mind, I suggest that the antinomial conflict is much more general than is often thought and deploys a correspondingly more general (what Kant elsewhere calls a "transcendental") conception of matter as substance (A267/B323). This view is suggested in the *Inaugural Dissertation,* where Kant tells us that by the "matter" of the world he means simply the parts, understood as substances (*Diss.* 2:390). Later in the same work, he suggests that to consider the world in respect of its matter is to consider the "natures of the substances of which it exists, whether they are material or immaterial" (*Diss.* 2:407). This of course immediately links the notion of matter with substance, but does not identify the fundamental "matter" in existence with material (extended) substance.[39]

This more abstract conception of matter as the ultimate constituent of all reality (the constituent elements [*essentialia*] of being) is recognized in the *Critique,* and further understood as that which is given to the understanding, "at least in concept" (A267/B323). In the section on the Concepts of Reflection, Kant also characterizes it as the "determinable in general" (*das Bestimmbare überhaupt;* A267/B323). In the *Critique,* of course, Kant ultimately argues that matter can only be given through sensation under the subjective conditions of space and time, and so is not prior to form. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that if this were not so, then the matter of being would have to be given prior to the form, and Leibniz, and a monadology, would be right (A267/B323–A268/B324). Indeed, contained in the thesis position is clearly the presumption that matter is prior to form (space and time). This be-

39 See also Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics, Metaphysik Dohna* 28:663.

comes particularly clear if we keep in mind that the thesis represents the noncritical position of a transcendental realist.[40]

If we take Kant to be presenting in the thesis a more general argument not particularly about material (extended) body but about the matter of all existence, understood in the most abstract sense as substance, we can begin to make some sense of his arguments. First, Kant is not illegitimately assuming that all extended matter is composite. Kemp Smith is thus incorrect to charge Kant with the illicit antecedent assumption that extended matter is composite substance. Moreover, because the argument does not assume that the matter (constituent elements, or substance) of all being is compound (indeed, it seeks to show that it is not), Schopenhauer's similar charge that the argument presupposes that matter is *compound* also misses the point. The argument moves from the conception of a compound in general to the necessity of a self-subsisting (simple) being. Because the argument is completely general or rational, Kant explicitly distances himself from any argument that presupposes empirical concepts, or seeks any explanation of bodies, a fact that enables us to understand Kant's hesitancy in referring to the thesis argument as a transcendental atomistic (cf. A442/B470).

We need to keep in mind that the conflict is generated precisely because both sides to the dispute share the common view that appearances are things in themselves. Although a full discussion of this point will have to be reserved until after we have examined the antithesis, it must be noted that if appearances were things in themselves, then we could deduce consequences about appearances from concepts alone (cf. A268/B324). More specifically, if appearances (objects of the senses) were simply confused representations of *things as they are,* and if *things as they are* are known clearly and distinctly through pure concepts, then pure concepts alone would yield knowledge of appearances. Although things might appear (confusedly) to us in space, they "really" are not spatial. Kant's view is that the transcendental realist defending the thesis position is committed to this mistake. In arguing about things in general, he quite erroneously takes himself to be entitled to conclusions that hold for material objects (appearances).[41] In this, the thesis inference to the simple exploits an ambiguity in the term "composite."

40 Kant explicitly links the assumption that matter is prior to form up to the conflation of appearances and things in themselves. Again, this is particularly clear in the chapter on the Concepts of Reflection. See A268/B324.

41 I take it that this responds to problems with understanding how the thesis and antithesis genuinely conflict. On this point, see Kemp Smith's *Commentary,* pp. 490–491.

If composition really is a *merely* external relation, then it presupposes self-subsisting, simple (and so ultimately nonextended, nonspatial) substances. The antithesis also exploits this ambiguity, arguing that precisely because composition is an *external* relation, it presupposes as its condition space. Thus, whereas the thesis is committed to the view that the matter of being is prior to form, the antithesis argues that form is essentially linked to any being, understood as a composite.

THE NATURE OF THE SIMPLE. The fact that the thesis argument abstracts from the connection between substance and space is similarly overlooked by Al-Azm, who, in a highly influential work, argues that the thesis position is concerned to prove the existence of elementary (spatially located) particles of matter.[42] Al-Azm has recognized that the topic of the argument is "substance in general" and not simply extended (material) substance.[43] Somewhat paradoxically, however, he nevertheless goes on to argue that the position is exclusively Newtonian.[44] More specifically, he claims that the thesis position is representative of Clarke's argument (against Leibniz) in favor of the atomistic theory of matter. As with Kemp Smith's Leibnizian reading, Al-Azm's interpretation is misleading. First, Kant nowhere indicates that the simple in question is to be exclusively understood as a material particle. Again, the claim that Leibnizian souls are not under consideration does not warrant the assumption that only *material* particles are, because the former claim is only meant to limit the discussion to *composita* (simples given in a whole). It is true that Kant says that the thesis might be "properly entitled" the "transcendental atomistic," a title that in turn reflects a kind of Newtonian argument for the elementary particles of matter (A442/B470).[45] However, Kant immediately goes on to refer to the thesis of the second antinomy not as a transcendental atomistic, but rather as the "dialectical principle of monadology," on the grounds that he is not representing an argument used to explain bodily appearances (*molecula*e) (ibid.). The fact that Kant explicitly denies that the argument of the thesis is about matter in the sense used to explain bodily appear-

42 Al-Azm, *The Origin of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies,* p. 52.

43 Jonathan Bennett also emphasizes the "rationalistic" conception of substance at issue in the second antinomy. See Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* pp. 164–167.

44 More specifically, he argues that the thesis is designed to prove the existence of elementary particles of matter; see Al-Azm (*The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies*), pp. 46–58. See also Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* pp. 197–206.

45 Here it can be noted that the fact that Kant refers to this as a "transcendental" atomistic should immediately warn us not to assume any kind of traditional atomism. As a transcendental atomistic, one abstracts from a necessary connection to space-time.

ances lobbies against Al-Azm's attempt to support a Newtonian reading. The problem is that all of Clarke's arguments for the simple are used to explain bodily appearances.[46] Al-Azm's position becomes increasingly untenable when we turn to the antithesis, which he takes to be representative of the Leibnizian rejection of elementary simple material parts. The problem is that the antithesis position concludes that there are no simple substances in existence at all, and this is straightforwardly incompatible with a Leibnizian monadology.

There is another, deeper, problem with Al-Azm's reading, and it is that it is at odds with the whole thrust of Kant's argument in the Dialectic. The cosmological conflict represents a clash of ideas of reason, and because of this, Kant's position is that both sides of the argument are compelling. The argument is compelling insofar as it represents a legitimate, albeit subjective, demand of reason for the unconditionally simple. More specifically, it exploits a purely conceptual necessity, to wit, that the concept of a composite commits us to the concept of the simple, which externally relates to comprise it. There is evidence that Kant takes this inference to be analytically true and acceptable if it concerns ideas only.[47] Thus, in his response to Eberhard, Kant readily admits that "reason requires the simple as the foundation of all composites."[48] This view accords with Kant's claim in the *Critique* that the antinomial conflicts are not "artificial" errors, but express a natural and inevitable feature of our reason. It is certainly a feature that Kant wholeheartedly accepted in the *Physical Monadology,* despite his lack of adherence to any strictly Leibnizian or Newtonian view.[49] Indeed,

46 See Clarke's Fourth Reply in the *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence,* ed. H. G. Alexander (New York: Manchester University Press, 1956), esp. pp. 53–54.

47 Kant explicitly states this view in his "On a Discovery According to which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One." See Henry E. Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 118.

48 Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy,* p. 120.

49 Kant's own early attempts to argue for the simple are in the *Physical Monadology* of 1764. The text is motivated by the desire to reconcile a Newtonian dynamics with a Leibnizian-like monadology. As is well known, the early strategy, in the *Physical Monadology,* was to argue simultaneously for "simple" substances (monads) and for the infinite divisibility of space as proven by geometry. Kant takes two steps: (1) he concludes from reasons remarkably similar to those adduced in the thesis argument that the simple is required as a condition for the existence of any composite. The necessity of the simple is here accepted by Kant despite his lack of adherence to either an exclusively Leibnizian or a Newtonian view. See *Phys. Monad.* 1:447; 53. There, Kant (like Leibniz and Clarke) moves from the fact that composition is a "merely external" (read: contingent) relation

throughout the mid 1770s, in conjunction with the development of the idea of the Dialectic, Kant consistently referred to the transcendent principles of reason (including the principle that "There is a first part, namely the simple as *principium* of composition") as "subjectively necessary" (*R* 5757, 17:703–704; see also *R* 4759, 17:709–710). The fact that Kant consistently refers to the principle of *reason* here is instructive, for it further demonstrates that the simple in question is not to be construed as an elementary particle of (space-occupying) matter. Such a particle, as Kant himself was clearly aware, would continue to be a sensible object despite the fact that it is not consciously apprehended by us.[50] These minute particles, Kant suggests, are legitimately recognized or supposed by the understanding in its attempts to explain bodies, but are to be distinguished from the absolutely simple substances necessarily conceived and demanded by reason. The latter, Kant claims, are posited as supersensible objects. What is instructive is Kant's adamant assertion that the simple demanded by *reason* is the *unconditionally* simple that lies at the ground of all being as *supersensible* object. Insofar as the thesis of the first antinomy is concerned to establish this, it cannot be read to be arguing for Newtonian particles of matter.

These considerations offer substantial support for the claim that Kant himself took the idea of the unconditionally simple to be a necessary concept of reason. I do not take this to mean that the concept therefore succeeds in referring to an actual object (i.e., is an idea that has objec-

to the necessity of a simple being. The driving motivation for Kant's argument is the desire to reconcile the Leibnizian demand for the ultimately simple with the conception of substance as spatially located. Hence, he (2) denies that the infinite divisibility of real space demonstrates the infinite divisibility of substances in space. This is accomplished by importing Newton's doctrine of central forces into the monadology. More specifically, Kant maintains that an absolutely simple substance can occupy space without being extended in space, and that it can do so by virtue of its repulsive force. In this way, Kant thought he had succeeded in overcoming the "conflict" between a metaphysics of simple substance and the geometrical conception of space as infinitely divisible. There are a number of reasons why Kant was forced to abandon the position of the *Physical Monadology*. As noted by Friedman, one problem stems from the attempt to argue for the primacy of nonextended monads and to build up a conception of space as derived from the dynamical laws that govern their interaction. Not only does this threaten the universal applicability of geometry, but, more important, Kant came to realize that the dynamical relations between monads presuppose space. For a good discussion of this issue, see Alison Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,* North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy, vol. 3 (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview, 1993), esp. pp. 25–54.

50 Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy,* p. 122. Kant refers to Newton's *lamellae* in this connection.

tive reality). As we shall see in the final chapter, it is essential to the "project" of reason in its efforts to guide the employment of the understanding and to bring such knowledge to systematic completeness. At this point, it is nevertheless clear that Kant is not interested in arguing that the falsity of the thesis position follows from the illegitimacy of the idea of the simple.[51] Characteristically, Kant argues for the subjective necessity of the ideas throughout the Dialectic. In the paralogisms, for example, Kant straightforwardly argues that the so-called dialectical syllogisms are analytically true and acceptable, so long as they are understood to be expressing purely conceptual or transcendental claims. The paralogistic assertions that "I, as thinking being, am substance," or "I am simple," for instance, are taken by Kant to be both true and necessary, so long as we understand these to be purely formal or conceptual claims about our representation "I" (A349–350; A355–358).

As in the earlier paralogistic case, the inference to the simple in the second antinomy becomes problematic for Kant only insofar as it is supposed to yield a substantive metaphysical conclusion – here, that nothing exists at all except the simple. The generality of the argument (which is what makes it attractive from reason's standpoint) also mitigates it. The argument is false because it deduces a metaphysical (synthetic a priori) conclusion from a formal demand of reason, that is, from the dialectical principle of monadology. The formal demand of reason, however necessary and legitimate, is not materially informative. The problem is that we cannot deduce consequences about the composite, understood as an object of experience, simply from concepts. To do so is to undertake a transcendental application of concepts. Such an attempt would be satisfactory if appearances were things in themselves (and if we could acquire knowledge of the latter), but a central feature of Kant's criticisms of the thesis argument is that appearances are not things in themselves (and we cannot acquire such knowledge). Indeed, just this claim will motivate Kant's suggestion that the mathematical antinomies provide an indirect argument for transcendental

51 I thus agree with Karl Ameriks, who notes that Kant continues to accept the rationalist assertion that simple substances are required, despite the fact that he [Kant] denies that they are parts of bodies. See Ameriks, "The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 249–279, esp. pp. 260–261. As Ameriks notes, Kant's relationship to traditional ontology is ambiguous. I am attempting to provide an interpretation that recognizes this fact, but which also accommodates the "critical" reinterpretation of the ideas of reason as having a merely "regulative" status. See Chapter 8.

idealism. Here, we may recall Kant's claim in the thesis that the argument for the simple only holds for composites understood in the strict sense that their unification is accidental. The concept of such a composite, that is, commits us to the notion of something self-subsistent. Because a self-subsistent being is a thing in itself, however, it is a merely intellectual entity – something demanded by reason but something the real possibility of which is not demonstrated. Hence, in the Observation on the Antithesis, Kant tells us that when we are concerned with appearances, "it is not sufficient to find for the pure concept of the composite formed by the understanding the concept of the simple" (A441/B469).[52]

Although Leibniz provides an especially obvious instance of the kind of inference to the simple with which Kant is concerned, it is important to note that since the argument is about the *composite in general*, it leads to conclusions about what Kant would call both noumenal and phenomenal objects. In this connection, the demand for the absolutely simple that is expressed in the thesis argument, despite its generality, is instantiated in a number of very different traditional arguments of the eighteenth century – the writings not only of Leibniz and Wolff but also those of Clarke and, perhaps more interestingly, Kant himself. Oftentimes (although not in Kant's case), philosophers moved from the principle of sufficient reason, because simple elements were conceived to be the sufficient reason of bodies. Leibniz, for example, takes the essence of composite being to be the state of being of its constituents. Indeed, in the *Monadology* we are told simply that there must be such simple substances precisely because there are composites, and a composition is by definition a collection or *aggregatum* of simple substances.[53]

As with the argument in the thesis, Leibniz's arguments clearly move from the pure concept of the composite. The necessity of simple substances follows straightforwardly from the fact that they provide the ground of the existence of any composite. But this same view is stated

52 This criticism is traceable back to Kant's precritical writings, especially the *Dilucidatio* and the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer.* In the *Dilucidatio* of 1755, Kant argues against the metaphysician's attempt to deduce objective truths from formal, "negative" principles, such as the principle of contradiction. See *Nova Dilucidatio,* 1:384–391. In the *Dreams of a Spirit Seer,* Kant explicitly argues that sensible experience alone provides us with the data requisite for knowledge of reality. See *Traume eines Geistsehers, erlautert durch Traume der Metaphysik* (1766), 2:315–373. In the *Critique* this kind of "antirationalist" argument is forcefully deployed against Leibniz.

53 Leibniz, *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays,* trans. Paul Schrecker and Anne Martin Schrecker (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 148.

by Clarke in the correspondence with Leibniz. According to Clarke, it is manifestly absurd to suggest that matter is composed out of infinitely divisible parts, since in the absence of some ultimately indivisible particles, there would be no matter (nothing existing) at all.[54] Although Leibniz and Clarke certainly disagree about whether the necessary simple being in question is a material particle (atom) or an immaterial monad, they clearly agree that some ultimately simple element is required, and for the same reasons. The fundamental point is that there must be something ultimately simple or indivisible that grounds the possibility of the existence of any composite. In this, both Leibniz and Clarke fall victim to the dialectical principle of monadology in the attempt to satisfy the rational principle or demand for the unconditionally simple (cf. *R*4759 17:709–710). Precisely because the argument is about objects (composites) *in general,* it lends itself to these kinds of claims about both empirical objects (bodies) and nonempirical objects. In this, the argument gets its force by its conflation of appearances with things in themselves.

This last point is brought out by noting that both Leibniz and Clarke argue from the concept of composite to the necessity of some simple as its necessary condition. Clarke is particularly sloppy about this, for again he erroneously takes the "simple" to be a compositional element of bodies. Although this allows him to deal consistently with bodies, it erroneously takes the simple to occupy space. Insofar as Clarke locates the simple in space, he would be a very easy target for Kant. A classic example of this type of confusion is also provided by Eberhard, who attempts to demonstrate the objective reality of the concept of simple beings (understood as nonsensible elements) by locating them in intuition. This is accomplished by taking the simple to be something like a Newtonian particle or atom, something that actually combines to create a compound, even though it cannot ever be sensed or experienced.[55]

Leibniz, of course, is no better off. Although he properly locates the simple in the supersensible, he errs in trying to deduce metaphysical consequences about appearances from a pure concept. From the vantage of the *Critique,* all these various arguments for the simple confuse appearances with things in themselves. What is of interest to Kant, however, is the fact that both arguments are instantiations of reason's attempt to move from the concept of the composite to the unconditon-

54 Again, see Alexander, *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence,* esp. Clarke's fourth letter, p. 54.
55 See Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy,* p. 121.

ally simple that lies at its ground. Kant is interested, that is, in detailing the natural and inevitable feature of our reason that generates these and all such arguments for the simple. The point is that these arguments (even Clarke's) do not move from any "empirical" concept of matter but rather from the pure concept of the "composite." The antithesis argument will seek to undermine the thesis on the grounds that, contrary to the thesis assumption, space is to be viewed as a necessary condition for all composition. Indeed, the very same conception of composition as an external relation that grounds the inference to the simple also proves that the very possibility of such a relation is space. After all, external relations between substances presuppose space as their condition. On this last point the antithesis seeks to overcome the argument of the thesis.

THE ANTITHESIS. The argument for the antithesis runs as follows (cf. A435/B463–A437/B465):

SHOW: No composite thing in the world is made of simple parts, and nowhere in the world exists anything simple.

1 Assume the opposite: suppose that a substantial composite is made of simple parts.
2 Since all composition (because it is merely an external relation) is possible only in space, space itself must be made up of as many parts as the composite.
3 Space is not made up of parts, it is infinitely divisible.
4 Therefore every part of the composite must occupy a space.
5 Therefore the absolutely first part (the simple) occupies space.
6 Everything real which occupies space contains a manifold of constituents externally related, and is therefore composite, and every real composite is made of substances not accidents.
7 Therefore, the simple is a composite of substances.
8 Because (7) is said to be self-contradictory, the argument concludes that "The absolutely simple is a mere idea which can never be experienced and thus has no application in the exposition of appearances" (A437/B465).

The argument for the antithesis turns on the claim that "everything real which occupies space" is extended and, therefore, composite. The simple must occupy space. But to occupy space is to be extended, and, hence, every simple item must itself be a composite. Because real composites are aggregates of substances, we end up in the absurd position

that the simple is itself a composite of substances. Because this is self-contradictory, we must deny that there are any simple substances whatsoever in space. This argument is clearly grounded in the assumption that composite substantiality presupposes space. In direct opposition to the thesis, then, the antithesis position sees a tight connection between space and composition, something that, I have argued, is simply not true of the thesis argument. In such a case, the kind of composite under consideration is far less general than in the thesis, which is confirmed by Kant's repeated references in the antithesis to the composite as "body." It also attacks precisely that assumption motivating the thesis, namely, that the "matter" of all being is prior to the form.

This tight connection between composite being and space has caused considerable controversy in the secondary literature. It is often suggested that the antithesis argument turns on an appeal to the arguments offered in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Indeed, Kant appears to be saying that the problem with the argument for simplicity is that it violates the sensible conditions of our intuition as outlined under the auspices of his own transcendental idealism. In support of this, we may note that the antithesis argument complains that "an absolutely simple object can never be given in any possible experience. And since by the world of sense we must mean the sum of all possible experiences, it follows that nothing simple is to be found anywhere in it" (A437/B465). This claim is echoed in the antithesis claim that "simplicity cannot be inferred from any perception whatsoever" (A437/B465). Statements such as these might lead one to think that Kant is arguing against the thesis argument on the grounds that it fails to accept his own transcendental idealism. Because of this, and despite Kant's own claims that both the thesis and the antithesis arguments are false, Kant seems to be endorsing in some sense the antithesis position, or at least recommending it over that of the thesis.[56]

I do not think that this is the case. The antithesis argument, it is true, does broadly argue from the conditions under which objects are given or intuited. But what is clearly relevant here is the antithesis claim that objects of experience are necessarily given in space. Although Kant does often phrase this point in the terminology of transcendental idealism, it is important to note that he is not alone in this view. As with the thesis assumption of simplicity, both Newton and Leibniz accept this in some form or another. For Newton, of course, absolute space is an on-

56 This appears to be suggested by Bennett in his *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 166.

tological condition of things. Leibniz, too, holds that matter (as "mere appearance," or as confused representation of things as they are) is spatial. Given this, the question is whether the argument of the antithesis requires the further, uniquely Kantian, claim that this space is merely a subjective condition of *our intuition* and that, independently of us, it is *nothing whatsoever.* It does not.

Note that the antithesis argument moves from the claim that all matter occupies space to the claim that all matter is extended and therefore divisible. Although it follows that we cannot experience any unconditionally simple, this conclusion does not rest on the further assumption that space is nothing but a form of intuition. Moreover, although Kant is quick to urge that the argument turns on the conception of "bodies" and bodies are "appearances," this is clearly to be understood as the claim that "bodies" require and presuppose space (cf. A442/B470–A443/B471), a claim that both Newton and Leibniz accept. Although the antithesis argument charges that the monadists fail to see that appearances are not things in themselves (A443/B471), the distinction between appearances and things in themselves here is an empirical (i.e., not the transcendental) distinction.[57] Because of this, the antithesis argument is only committed to the fairly modest claim that supporters of the thesis fail to see that objects of experience are one and all given in and necessarily occupy space. Indeed, one must read Kant to be making this more modest claim, for he argues that the conflicts between the thesis and antithesis are irresolvable because both sides fail to draw the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Once we draw, in addition to the empirical distinction between appearances and things in themselves, the transcendental distinction, it is clear that the antithesis also takes appearances for things in themselves precisely because space is there held to have mind independence. To understand this, recall Kant's claim in the Aesthetic, which is that both Leibniz and Newton take spatiotemporal properties to hold of things independently of the human mind (cf. A23/B38).

The Resolution to the Mathematical Antinomies

A crucial interpretive issue related to the mathematical antinomies centers on Kant's attempt to argue that both sides to the dispute are un-

57 For a discussion of this distinction between the empirical and transcendental distinction, see Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* pp. 3–13.

dermined by a shared failure to distinguish appearances from things in themselves. I have argued that the thesis position takes appearances for things in themselves by assuming that the matter of all being is prior to space (that it precedes any relations), and is knowable by the pure understanding alone. This reading, at least with respect to the second antinomy, is confirmed in the Axioms of Intuition. There Kant argues that all appearances are subject to the truths established for pure intuition in geometry (infinite divisibility). Kant insists that to deny that objects of experience are infinitely divisible is to succumb to the "chicanery of falsely constructed reason" (*Schikanen einer falsch be/lehrten Vernunft*), which "erroneously professing to isolate the objects of the senses [*Gegenstände der Sinne*] from the formal condition of our sensibility, represents them, in spite of the fact that they are mere appearances, as objects in themselves [*Gegenstände an sich selbst*], given to the understanding" (A166/B207). Against this, the antithesis position correctly denies that the matter of being is prior to form and sees space (and so extension) as necessarily conditioning the very possibility of composite being. Even so, appearances (bodies) are here taken for things in themselves as well. Because space itself is held to obtain of objects independently of the human mind, the antithesis position is committed to its own "transcendental" employment of concepts. Here we may recall Kant's claim that the transcendental employment of the understanding generates a "tendency to employ the concept of space beyond the conditions of sensible intuition" (A88/B121). Essentially this same problem is seen in the first antinomy, where the thesis argues for a first beginning by abstracting "the world" from its necessary connection to space and time, and so treating it as a world in general, given to the understanding. Against this, the antithesis denies the abstraction, but only at the cost of projecting space and time as universal ontological conditions.

Kant's view is obviously that both of these positions are problematic. While the theses take pure concepts to be materially informative, and so to yield general metaphysical conclusions, the antitheses take what are for Kant merely the subjective forms of our intuition to be universal ontological conditions. Thus, for example, the thesis argument for a first beginning seeks to show that the *world in general* must have limit (i.e., an infinite regress is impossible) and erroneously transmutes this into the claim that the *spatiotemporal world* must have a beginning in time. Similarly, the thesis argument for simple substances moves from the claim that composite *objects in general* are composed of simple substances and transmutes this into the claim that *appearances* themselves

are aggregates of simple substances. Although these arguments express reason's legitimate need to seek "intelligible beginnings," the falsity of the metaphysical conclusions rests on the illicit extension beyond reason's ken. Similar considerations underlie the falsity of the antitheses, for they demonstrate that there are no first beginnings or simples whatsoever by showing that such limits or simples could never be objects of possible experience. Here, the proponent of the argument establishes a universal (metaphysical) claim by appealing to the conditions of intuition, an attempt already attacked in the *Inaugural Dissertation*.[58]

These considerations illuminate Kant's claim that both the thesis and the antithesis arguments assume that the sensible world is a whole existing in itself.[59] The assumption of a world whole characterizes the thesis and antithesis positions of the mathematical antinomies *collectively, or together*. In this, the mathematical antinomies together present us with two perennial metaphysical drives in cosmology; we want to

58 See Kant's discussion of the fallacy of subreption in section 5 of the *Inaugural Dissertation* (2:411–414).

59 Although this is less controversial in the case of the first antinomy, it seems to pose real problems in the case of the second. One might, of course, argue that implicit in the arguments of the second antinomy is the view that the world itself is the whole composed of parts. According to the thesis, then, the world itself is given as a whole or aggregate of parts that are themselves ultimately decomposable into simple substances, or elements. Correlatively, the antithesis argues that the world is a whole composed of parts that are themselves infinitely divisible. On this view, both arguments are (at least implicitly) about the world. This interpretation seems to make sense of Kant's attempt to undermine the arguments by showing that the "world" is neither a whole given in itself nor a knowable object. The problem with this interpretation is that neither the thesis nor the antithesis of the second antinomy is actually about the world. Both explicitly argue about composites *in* the world. Unfortunately, it is not at all clear that arguments about such objects necessarily presuppose anything whatsoever about the way the world itself is given. Why, for example, couldn't a theoretical physicist speculate about the ultimate constitution of objects without making any commitment to the mode of existence of the world-whole itself? Moreover, even if such investigations operate in accordance with the background assumption about the nature of the spatiotemporal world as a whole, it does not follow that the arguments about the ultimate constitution of reality are *logically dependent* on this assumption. One can imagine, for example, a kind of Rylean claim that the "world," like the "university," is an abstract term that does not pick out a concrete object (a thing empirically given). Does this really render the attempts to determine whether or not matter is infinitely divisible entirely nonsensical? In response to this problem, it could be noted that both the thesis and the antithesis are concerned with the very strong claims that either "every composite" or "no composite" is divisible into simple parts. To argue in this way is to suppose that the set of all composite objects is given. In this sense, then, the arguments appeal to the notion of the entire set of such objects. Therefore the idea of a "world-whole," understood as the complete set of all appearances and their conditions (e.g., parts), is clearly presupposed.

know the extent of the cosmos as a whole in space-time, and we want to acquire knowledge of the ultimate constituents of that whole. It could be argued that there is a very real sense in which these two issues are related in cosmology. If matter is infinitely divisible, then there would seem to be a problem sustaining any claim that the cosmos as a whole is finite in space-time. Similarly, any end to the division of the parts of matter would seem to influence the postulation of an infinite universe. If there is some set of ultimate "particles," then the set itself is either finite or not. If finite, then the universe as a whole is finite; the infinitude of the whole would thus rest on a proof that the set of all particles is itself infinite in number.[60] The rational demand for the limited cosmos in extent and division, and its assumption that this is given, characterizes the thesis. The competing necessity that space-time be viewed as the necessary condition for all being is expressed in the antithesis. Nevertheless, it is not, for Kant, simply a historical oddity that the metaphysicians of his time engaged in rational cosmology, and Kant does not think that the debates about infinitude and divisibility bear only a coincidental relation to a metaphysics of the world-whole. Further, Kant simply does not take himself to be excavating the peculiar views of his predecessors; he takes himself to be tracing the antinomial conflicts back to their unavoidable source in human reason. This last project is clearly connected up, for Kant, with the claim about reason's inherent and unavoidable illusion.

To understand this, we may note that both the first and the second antinomies are instantiations of the more general dialectical argument outlined in Part I (i.e., "If the conditioned is given, the unconditioned is given"; "objects of the senses are given as conditioned"; etc.). Accordingly, the failure to understand the transcendental ideality of space and time, and so to see that appearances are transcendentally ideal, vitiates both the thesis and the antithesis arguments. Using the (more problematic) second antinomy as an example, consider the following:

1 If the conditioned is given, the entire series of conditions and so the absolutely unconditioned *with respect to division* is given.
2 Objects of the senses (*composites*) are given as conditioned.
3 Therefore the entire series of conditions (parts) of objects of the senses (composites) are also given.

60 Compare Kant's own claims at A173/B215.

Note that the argument generates two equally compelling conclusions. More specifically, premise 3 may be understood as either:

3a The unconditionally simple which lies at the end of the entire (completed) division is also given.

or:

3b The unconditioned totality of all division (the total, infinite set of all divisions) is also given.

It is precisely because the "composite" in premise 2 is erroneously understood to be a thing in itself that both conclusions can be legitimately drawn. In short, if composites are *things as they are,* then we must conceive their elements to be either prior to or conditioned by (coextensive with) space (i.e., the exclusive disjunction seems to stand). Transcendental idealism shows the error in both. Because space necessarily conditions any composite, understood as appearance, we cannot argue with the thesis that appearances have the unconditionally simple at their ground. As appearance, the composite and each of its parts is necessarily given in space. But because space itself is transcendentally ideal, we also cannot conclude (along with the antithesis) from features of our sensation of the real to a metaphysics of things as they are; that is, we cannot conclude that "things as they are" independent of us necessarily conform to the (geometrical) features of space-time (e.g., infinite divisibility).

These considerations directly relate to Kant's earlier claim that there is an amphiboly contained in the second premise of the first dialectical syllogism that grounds "the" antinomy of reason ("if the conditioned is given, the unconditioned is given"; "objects of the senses are given as conditioned"; etc.). This amphiboly is reflected in the efforts by both parties to employ concepts transcendentally. It also shows that both parties draw their erroneous conclusions under the (separate) motivation of the transcendental and illusory premise 1. Both parties, that is, accept the claim that the unconditioned is given, and that we can attain to a metaphysics world-whole, or the composite. If Kant is correct, if the major premise expresses an illusion of reason, one that is merely subjectively necessary, then he is also correct to deny that it can be deployed in metaphysical arguments that seek to deduce material consequences about the nature or constitution of the world. Moreover, to the extent that this principle continues to motivate us (and it surely does), Kant is

correct to reinterpret it as playing a merely regulative (albeit indispensable) role in theoretical inquiries into nature. If one is a transcendental realist, of course, to see this.

The Dynamical Antinomies

The distinction between transcendental illusion (P_2) and transcendental realism (the conflation of appearances and things in themselves) is crucial to Kant's evaluation of the antinomial errors. In light of it, Kant can undertake to resolve the antinomial conflicts without "ridding us" of the unceasing (and, for Kant, necessary) influence of P_2. In the case of the mathematical antinomies, transcendental realism results in two mutually false or unacceptable conclusions. Although I shall not spend as much time on these, I do wish to suggest that the sway of P_2 is further at work in the dynamical antinomies, where it functions, together with the rational cosmologist's transcendental realism, to generate a conflict of reason with itself. Unlike the mathematical antinomies, resolution of these involves establishing the possibility that both sides to the dispute are correct. This resolution is accomplished by pointing out that the transcendental ideality of appearances (illuminated by the earlier mathematical conflicts) opens up the possibility that the conclusions reached on both sides are compatible. This possibility is first obvious in the third antinomy, where Kant sets the demand for an absolute, spontaneous first cause of the world against the demand for a lawful (mechanistic) determinism in the world.

The Third Antinomy. The thesis argument for the third antinomy may be stated as follows:

SHOW: In order to explain the totality of all appearances, it is necessary to assume, in addition to mechanistic causality, another kind of causality, Transcendental Freedom.

1 Assume the opposite: There is only mechanistic causality.
2 If (1) then everything which takes place presupposes a preceding state upon which it inevitably follows according to a rule. This entails that the preceding state, as itself something having taken place, must also presuppose a preceding state upon which it has followed according to a rule, *ad infinitum* (i.e. there is no first beginning to the causal series).
3 But (2) is at odds with the law of nature, which states that nothing takes place without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori,* i.e. the

proposition asserting that everything takes place solely in accordance with mechanistic causality leads to a contradiction.

4 Therefore, it is not the case that mechanistic causality is the sole kind of causality; we must assume a kind of causality which is not itself determined by any antecedent state or cause (Transcendental Freedom).

The thesis claim is essentially that mechanistic causality is not sufficient to explain the totality of all appearances in the world. The problem is that if we only admit mechanistic causality, then we are not entitled to assume any first (as opposed to merely relative) beginning. Not only is the denial of any first beginning at odds with reason's demand for "completeness of the series on the side of the causes that arise the one from another" (A446/B474) but, more crucially, the assumption that mechanistic causality is exhaustive is self-contradictory. As Kant puts it "the law of nature is just this, that nothing takes place without a cause sufficiently determined *a priori*" (A446/B474).

There is a great deal of controversy about this last claim, much of it stemming from phrases "law of nature" and "sufficiently determined a priori."[61] For our present purposes, we might simply note the following. The claim that *everything* that takes place in nature does so according to "laws" entails that for any event x, there is an antecedent state of affairs (a cause) sufficient to product x. This means, if generalized, that there is an antecedent state of the series as a whole, that is, a causal origin of the world itself (cf. A450/B478). Although it might seem that this involves a "category mistake" (it involves moving from the claim that events *in* the world are grounded in a sufficient cause, to the claim that the world itself is), it is important to see that if appearances are things in themselves, this move would be licensed by the presumed "universality" of the causal principle. As Kant repeatedly notes, the world (as a pseudoempirical object) is something that is supposed to be given. Unfortunately, the very same principle that demands a first beginning also precludes it. By the very same causal principle, any first be-

61 See on this Kemp Smith's *Commentary,* p. 493. Following Schopenhauer, Kemp Smith argues that the thesis is invalid. According to Schopenhauer, the problem is that the argument moves from the claim that each event must have a "sufficient cause" to the unwarranted claim that any "sufficient cause" can only be one that takes into account the entire series of causes of the cause (i.e. a sufficient cause must include an account of the cause of the cause, etc.). In response to this problem, some have tried to make sense of the argument by distinguishing between the "laws of nature" and the "Law of Nature," where the latter is understood to be an importation of Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. (See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* p. 369, n. 5.)

ginning would also have to have a cause. To avoid this impasse, we must assume transcendental freedom (the spontaneity of absolutely beginning a sequence).

The antithesis counters that the postulation of any absolute beginning also undermines the very law of causality it seeks to uphold. The argument may be summarized as follows:

SHOW: There is no transcendental freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with the laws of nature.

1 Assume the opposite: there is a kind of causality through which events in the world can come about in accordance with a power of absolutely beginning a state (Transcendental Freedom).
2 If (1) then the causality of the cause (the first beginning) will have an absolute beginning as well; There will be no antecedent through which this act, in taking place, is determined in accordance with fixed laws.
3 But the law of nature is just this: that every beginning of action presupposes a state of the not yet existing cause. Thus, if there is a spontaneous cause, it follows that there is a state which has no causal connection with the preceding state of the cause, i.e. in no wise follows from it.
4 The assumption of transcendental freedom is thus incompatible with the law of causality, and leads to a contradiction. The kind of causality described in (3) conflicts with both the law of causality, and the "unity of experience" in accordance with that law.
5 Therefore, mechanistic causality prevails. (A447/B475)

Briefly, the claim is that an absolute spontaneity of cause could never be "causally connected" to its effect. To say that the two are causally connected is to say that the effect is determined to follow from the cause according to necessary rules. But in this case, there must be some connection between the state of the cause and its preceding state, which is itself determined according to a rule – that is, mechanistic causality prevails. Barring this, the assertion of transcendental freedom, taken to its conclusion, introduces what seems to be an entirely random event that is disconnected from the causal series in nature, and thus destroys the presumed lawfulness of nature, which motivates its postulation in the first place. In such a case, the unity of nature is also undermined.

In the third antinomy, the conflict rests in the fact that the thesis opts for a conception of causality that is abstracted from the spatiotemporal framework, and thus adopts the broadly Platonic view explicated ear-

lier. Hence, in the observation on the thesis, Kant notes that the "absolutely first beginning of which we are here speaking is not a beginning in time, but in causality" (A451/B479). The problem, evidently, is that the series of states is being viewed as a thing in itself, and on the basis of this, the rational demand for the unconditioned (P_2) is illicitly applied to the latter. Against this, the antithesis rightly notes that the conception of transcendental freedom represents an attempt to conceive of a first beginning by abstracting from "nature's own resources"(A451–452/B479–480). Insofar as the antithesis denies the justification for doing this, of course, it is said to adopt the broadly "Epicurean" standpoint (ibid.) The problem here, however, is that in refusing to move beyond "nature's own resources," the antithesis surreptitiously smuggles in sensible (spatiotemporal) conditions as the basis for a universal ontological claim. If space and time were such conditions (things in themselves), then of course the application of the demand for this unconditioned (P_2) would be warranted. Kant's view, however, is that space and time are not conditions of things in themselves.

The resolution to this antinomy thus consists in conceding the legitimacy of both positions, while denying the absolute universality of each of the conclusions. The thesis demand for an absolute (nontemporal) causal beginning might be allowed to stand, but certainly not as "part of" or as an explication of appearances in nature. Similarly, the antithesis conclusion can stand, but only in relation to objects in nature, considered as appearances. The fact that this alternative is open here and not in the first two antinomies issues from the aforementioned fact that the cause in question is not necessarily a temporal cause.[62] More specifically, in contrast to the demand for the ultimately simple in the second antinomy, the thesis explicitly argues for a cause or ground of appearances that is outside the spatiotemporal order. Nevertheless, here, as in the earlier cases, the conflict seems irresolvable only on the assumption that appearances are things in themselves. More specifically, if appearances were things in themselves, then it would certainly be true that either they are one and all subject to mechanistic causation or not. In such a case, it makes sense both to argue for a nontemporal beginning and to deny such a beginning. Left unresolved, then, this antinomy thus leaves us with the following dilemma: on the assumption of transcendental realism, both nature and freedom seem to be undermined. To avoid this conclusion, Kant once again appeals to transcendental idealism, which is supposed to rescue reason

62 See Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* pp. 200–201.

from the conflict. Given transcendental idealism, it remains possible that in addition to the mechanism of nature, there is an intelligible causal power.

The Fourth Antinomy. This method of resolving the conflict reaches its culmination in the fourth and final antinomy, where the demand for a necessary being is pitted against its denial. Kant's statement of the thesis argument in this antinomy is rather difficult to make out, partly because Kant takes the concept of "necessary being" to be problematic in its own right. This difficulty is reflected in the thesis argument of the fourth antinomy. Accordingly, the argument (here, for a necessary being) does not proceed, as in the other cases, in any strightforwardly apogogic manner. Indeed, the argument appears to contain two main parts:[63] Kant first appears to be arguing directly for the necessity of some necessary being and then turns to an indirect form of argumentation. Having argued directly for the existence of some necessary being, Kant tries to show that such a being must be considered to be part of (or contained in) the world itself on the grounds that the assumption of a necessary being outside the temporal series is impossible.

SHOW: There belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, an absolutely necessary being.

PART 1

SHOW: There exists a necessary being of some sort.

1 The sensible world, as the sum-total of all appearances, contains a series of alterations.
2 Every alteration stands under its condition, which precedes it in time and renders it necessary.
3 Every conditioned given presupposes a complete series of conditions up to the unconditioned which alone is absolutely necessary.
4 Thus, alteration exists only as a consequence of an absolutely necessary being; i.e. we must grant an absolutely necessary being.

PART 2

5 SHOW: This necessary existence belongs to the sensible world.
6 Suppose the opposite: the necessary being exists outside the world.

63 Al-Azm notes this point as well; see his *The Origin of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies,* p. 122.

7 If (6) then the series of alterations "begins" with a necessary cause not part of the world.
8 (7) is impossible! (For since the beginning of a time-series can be determined only through what precedes it in time, the supreme condition must exist in the time when the series was not yet .) So not (7).
9 Therefore the causality of the necessary cause of alterations (and so the cause itself) belongs to time, and hence to appearance. (A452/B480–A456/B484)

This argument raises a number of questions. It is often suggested that the argument appears to be defending the claim that there must be some (uncaused) cause of the series of alterations in the world and thus favors a conclusion already defended in the third antinomy. Indeed, Kant's presentation of the argument for necessary being is oftentimes interpreted in a way that reduces the notion of a "necessary being" to that of an "uncaused cause." Bennett, for example, claims, with respect to the fourth antinomy, that "the question is taken to be whether the series of causes must or can somehow terminate in something which is not caused by something else."[64] Because he takes the argument for a necessary being to be essentially the same as an argument for a (presumably first and unconditioned) uncaused cause, Bennett charges that the fourth antinomy is nothing more than a "re-run of the third antinomy."[65] In this, Bennett reiterates the concern already articulated by Kemp Smith, who laments the "identical" nature of the proofs of the third and fourth antinomies.[66] This may be compared to Al-Azm's similar contention that, in the fourth antinomy, "necessity" means "not causally dependent on anything else."[67] Given this, the argument of the thesis is taken to be attempting to demonstrate the necessity of some causally self-sufficient cause of the temporal series.

To be sure, Kant often *seems* to be suggesting that what is at issue in the thesis is whether there is some absolutely unconditioned (and so necessary) *cause* in the temporal series. Thus, we find in the thesis argument the claim that "the causality of the necessary cause of the alterations, and therefore the cause itself, must belong to time and so to appearance" (A454/B482). Insofar as Kant is also concerned to argue

64 Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic,* p. 241. 65 Ibid.
66 Kemp Smith, *Commentary.*
67 Al-Azm, *The Origin of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies,* p. 126. In accordance with this, Al-Azm contends that the argument of the thesis represents the "Newtonian view of the nature and constitution of the material world" (p. 125).

that any specifically *cosmological* argument must concern itself solely with a necessary being as *part of the temporal series,* he also claims that "This cause, even if it be viewed as absolutely necessary, must be such as can be thus met with in time, and must belong to the series of appearances" (A460/B488). These claims, in turn, seem to have fueled the previously cited suspicion, that the argument for necessary being is nothing more than a rehash of the third antinomy's argument for a first (uncaused) cause.

These suspicions, however, seem to me ungrounded. First of all, what is at issue in the thesis of the earlier, third, antinomy is precisely *not* a "temporal" beginning or cause. Here, we may recall Kant's previously cited claim, with respect to the third antinomy, that "the absolutely first beginning of which we are here speaking is not a beginning in time, but in causality" (A451/B479). Moreover, we know from the resolution to the third antinomy that Kant takes himself to have already demonstrated the compatibility of reason's demand for an absolute, causal beginning and the denial that such a beginning can be understood to be *part of the explication of appearances in nature.* These considerations should immediately make us pause before attempting to interpret the arguments of the fourth antinomy along the same lines as those of the third. For not only does the thesis of the fourth antinomy seek to demonstrate a necessary being or cause as *part of the temporal series;* its antithesis seeks to deny such a being either as part of or *outside of* such a series.

Given this, the weight of the argument in the thesis of the fourth antinomy lies not in the notion of a first beginning or uncaused cause but rather in that of a necessary being – a being whose nonexistence is impossible. Indeed, that Kant is more interested in the notion of a necessary being than in an uncaused cause is clear from the repeated suggestion that the thesis is designed to show that there is a being absolutely necessary that exists as *either* part of *or* as cause of the world (A452/B480). Kant is quite explicit about the difference between this claim and the claim ostensibly representative of the thesis argument of the third antinomy. Speaking of the fourth antinomy, he claims that "We are concerned here, not with unconditioned causality, but with the unconditioned existence of substance itself" (A558/B586). Insofar as the argument is explicitly designed to demonstrate the existence of a necessary being or cause as part of the sensible world, it would seem that there are two options. First, the cause or being might be construed in purely mechanistic terms as the "highest member of the cosmical series" in time. It seems more likely, however, that the term "cause" is be-

ing used in a fairly specific sense, to refer to something like what Spinoza had called an "immanent" as opposed to a "transitive" cause. The mark of an immanent cause is its inseparability from its effect. Because the argument is concerned to show that the necessary being (or cause) does not exist "apart from" the sensible world, it clearly appeals to a notion of an ultimate ground which is, contra the third antinomy, inseparable from its effect. Spinoza, of course, assigns this role to Nature ("God") as the absolutely first but also immanent cause of all things.[68] Once again, this suggests a distinction between the topics of the third and fourth antinomies.

Having said this, however, it must be conceded that the thesis argument of the fourth antinomy is still fairly difficult to make out. The ambiguity in the argument stems from the fact that Kant is simultaneously concerned to present an argument for necessary being, and also to maintain a strict demarcation between this (cosmological) argument for necessary being and a "transcendent" proof that seeks to demonstrate the existence of a necessary being outside of the cosmical series (i.e., God, as traditionally conceived). These two concerns explain the "two-part" structure of the thesis proof and give us some key to the argument. In the first part, Kant is clearly arguing for the existence of a necessary being in general, and he argues for such a being by introducing P_2, the rational demand for the absolutely unconditioned. Thus, according to the thesis, there must exist a necessary being as a part or cause (i.e., ground) of the series of alterations precisely because an absolutely necessary being, as the "unconditioned condition," is presupposed by the complete series of everything that is given as contingent, or conditioned. Hence, by P_2 we are required to assume the unconditioned as a necessary condition for the absolute totality of the series. As in the earlier cases, then, the demand for a necessary being is motivated by the transcendental and illusory assumption that there must exist an absolutely "unconditioned" for everything that is given as conditioned. Moreover, as in the earlier cases, this rational demand will generate a cosmological claim only given the rational cosmologist's transcendental realism (i.e., her conflation of appearances and things in themselves).

In the first part of the proof, the argument remains quite general and conceptual, and the term "cause" nowhere appears. Rather, Kant

68 See *Ethics,* pt. 1, propositions 16–18, in Spinoza, *Ethics and Selected Letters,* trans. Samuel Shirley (Hackett, 1982).

appears to be arguing from the fact that alterations are rendered "necessary" only insofar as they are determined to follow from (temporally) antecedent conditions *to* the existence of some absolutely necessary being as the ground of the totality, and thus as the ultimate condition of the possibility of each "necessary" alteration. Although Kant does of course speak of such antecedent conditions as "causes," the argument is motivated by the need for something that can ground necessity. This is supported not only by the wording in the first part of the proof, but also in the Observation on the Thesis. There Kant is quite explicitly concerned to show that the thesis argument moves from the empirical contingency of alterations in the world – that is, from their "dependence on empirically determining causes" – to an absolutely necessary being of some sort (A458/B486–A461/B489). It is worth attending once again to Kant's Observations on the Thesis. His first point is that the argument is cosmological precisely because it infers the necessary being from the empirical contingency of appearances in the temporal series, rather than arguing "deductively" from the concept of either a supreme being or that of "contingent beings in general" (A456/B484).

Insofar as it does this, the argument may be said to move from "empirical" features of the series of alterations to a notion of unconditionally necessary being only insofar as it incorporates a purely rational method of thinking the series as an absolute totality. As in the earlier antinomies, then, the thesis argument is motivated by general conceptual procedures. In this connection, Kant reminds us that the fourth antinomy thesis argument treats the series of states in the world in purely conceptual terms: "The series which we have in view is, therefore, really a series of concepts, not a series of intuitions in which one intuition is the condition of the other" (A559/B587–A560/B588). In speaking (presumably) of the first part of the proof, Kant thus suggests that in such a case, it is left undecided whether the necessary being is the world itself or something distinct from the world. Moreover, to think of the world in this way is precisely to adopt the "Platonic" model of "Being" as logically independent of the spatiotemporal framework. Nevertheless, the argument is complicated by the fact that this very general, and rational, demand for absolutely necessary being is subsequently applied to the series of alterations in time.

The interesting part of the argument thus comes in the second part, where Kant tries to limit the argument for necessary being to its proper "cosmological" domain. Taking the existence of some absolutely necessary being as already granted, the second part seeks to show that this

being must exist as part of the sensible world. The argument here is relatively straightforward, and consists in showing that if the necessary being is to function as the unconditioned condition of the temporal series, then it must be construed as a causal "beginning" of the series in time, and so must itself be in time. Or, as Kant himself puts it, the "necessary being must therefore be regarded as the highest member of the cosmical series" (A459/B487). Thus, it appears that Kant's reason for presenting the argument for necessary being in terms of the demand for an uncaused cause stems from the second part of the argument – that is, the desire to place the necessary being in time. For any real (as opposed to merely logical) ground or condition of the existence of a thing is understood by Kant to be a "cause."[69]

At first, the explicit attempt to place the existence of the necessary being "in time" might seem to be at odds with Kant's claim that the thesis arguments of the antinomies allow for "intelligible beginnings" and in this way adopt the Platonic perspective. In fact, however, this is not the case. The second part of the argument is clearly parasitic upon the first part, which is itself motivated by the purely rational demand for the unconditioned, and which involves thinking the series as an absolute totality. Again, the series is here being treated as a series of "concepts." Although the argument purports to treat a temporal (empirical) series, it does so by considering the series in abstraction from the conditions of time, and thus demanding an explanatory ground that is never met with in time.

Moreover, Kant is well aware of the tension built into the argument on this score. Indeed, the two-part form of the argument points to a feature that seems to be unique to the fourth antinomy: the thesis argument is in a very deep sense at odds with itself. Surely, one problem with the thesis argument is that it incoherently attempts to assign the necessary being a place in time, and thus to subject it to empirical conditions that are deeply at odds with the rational procedure for thinking the ground of the series of alterations as a totality. Kant's comments in the Observation on the Thesis are designed precisely to point out the various ways in which the argument falls prey to intelligible claims, even as its proponent works to present it in a purely cosmological form. In fact, Kant's remarks in the Observation on the Thesis suggest that he takes the argument to move from the conditioned in appearance to the "unconditioned in concept," where the latter is construed as the nec-

69 Compare the *Lectures on Metaphysics,* esp. *Metaphysik L2* (28:549).

essary condition of the absolute totality of the series (A456/B484). Thus, despite the fact that the necessary being is subsequently located within the temporal framework, its postulation is driven by purely rational interests (the transcendental and illusory P_2), and by a procedure for conceiving the series in purely conceptual terms.

Because of this, the thesis argument introduces a notion of absolute necessity that is at odds with its own attempt to ground the empirical series in time. Here is how. The thesis contends that appearances, insofar as they "contain" a series of alterations in time, are all empirically contingent (depend on "empirically determining causes"). The argument proceeds to suggest that, as empirically contingent, the entire series must terminate in some ultimate condition which is itself empirically unconditioned. But to be "empirically unconditioned" (and thus necessary) is to stand independent of empirically determining causes. Although this explains why the argument in the second part takes on the language of "causes," it also undermines the temporal nature of the proof by committing itself to an absolutely necessary being that grounds the series, thought as a totality. Insofar as it does this, however, it smuggles in the notion of a being as nonempirical (or empirically unconditioned). From the perspective of the thesis, of course, it is absolutely necessary to posit such a being in order to provide an explanatory ground for empirically conditioned (contingent) being. By definition, "contingent being" suggests existential dependence on something. The fact that the thesis argument implicitly appeals to an empirically unconditioned ground explains why (as we shall see) the antithesis must reject not only a necessary being as part of the world, but also one outside the world itself.

Spinoza clearly provides a historical instance of this kind of attempt to argue for necessary being as "part of" the world itself. Whereas the first part of the argument defends the postulation of some necessary being and seems to be "unsettled whether this being is the world itself or a thing distinct from it" (presumably as cause), the second seems to undermine the general nature of the argument and insist that the necessary being cannot be construed to exist apart from the world itself, understood as the totality of all appearances. Like Spinoza, then, the imagined proponent of the thesis argument seems to want to deny the possibility that there could be anything postulated outside the world as cause that could ground necessity.

Although the details of Spinoza's position are far too complex to discuss at length here, the central point is fairly simple. From a Spinozis-

tic perspective, all particular things (or "modes") are contingent in the sense that they only exist in a determinate way as a consequence of the antecedent conditions or "causes" from which they follow and on which they depend. It follows from this that the necessity attaching to any particular member of the causal series is only "relative" to its cause. There is, then, no absolute or unconditioned necessity to be found among the members of the causal series. Despite this, Spinoza contends that the (infinite) series *taken as a whole or totality* (roughly, the entire "order of nature") is itself absolutely or unconditionally necessary.[70] Moreover, because Spinoza rejects any appeal to substance pluralism, he is committed to the view that there cannot be anything outside the order of nature that grounds its existence. Spinoza's demand for an unconditionally necessary being is thus, as with the thesis of the fourth antinomy, grounded in a rational procedure for thinking the series as a totality. From a Kantian standpoint, Spinoza's conclusion is grounded in a species of transcendental realism. More specifically, the rational demand P_2 can only be applied to the series of alterations in time because appearances are taken for things in themselves.

So far, the thesis argument of the fourth antinomy is to be distinguished from both the third antinomy and from theological arguments for the existence of a transcendent being outside the series that grounds its necessity. It is distinct from each of these insofar as it is concerned to ground necessity, and to do so by placing the necessary being within the empirical series itself. The question is why Kant thinks that the strictly "cosmological" argument for necessary being is so compelling. Why, for example, is it important to defend the existence of a necessary being within the cosmical series? Another way of putting this query is to ask why Kant did not simply fold all arguments for necessary being into the theological one, especially since he seems committed to the claim that the argument for necessary being catapults us into a defense for an intelligible ground for the totality of appearances. This question seems most pressing because it seems clear that the argument for necessary being in the fourth antinomy does indeed smuggle in a notion of a necessary (empirically unconditioned) being that goes beyond any possible object of experience.

There are two responses to this problem. First, the argument for a necessary being as part of the temporal series gets its momentum from

70 *Ethics,* pt. 1, propositions 28, 29, pp. 50–51. See also Henry E. Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 70–78.

the conflation of appearances and things in themselves. Indeed, if appearances were things in themselves, then it would be appropriate to demand a ground of the "totality" of the series, by P_2. There is another, I think, deeper reason why the thesis demand for a necessary being as part of the temporal series is compelling. Although Kant is in no way explicit about this, it seems to me that he is concerned with our ability to formulate explanations of appearances (alterations in time) in terms of propositions having nomological status. That is, the explanation of phenomena in terms of necessary laws would seem to be at issue here. Moreover, the desire to ground the series of alterations in something absolutely necessary is linked up with reason's concern to provide an explanation of phenomena that is "complete." This, of course, accords with Kant's claim that the very function of reason is to introduce absolute necessity and completeness into its explanatory system.

Indeed, implicit in the argument appears to be the claim that if we do not admit any absolutely or unconditionally necessary being, then we are only entitled to assume a merely "relative" necessity. The implicit line of argument seems to go something like this: alterations, as determinations in time, are rendered necessary insofar as they follow from antecedent conditions (grounds that provide the explanations for such alterations) according to laws (cf. premise 2). Generalizing this, each conditioned or contingent being presupposes the entire series of all conditions that collectively ground the necessity of its existence. What reason demands, however, is the absolutely necessary and "unconditioned" condition for the totality of all appearances. In the absence of any absolutely necessary being, the "necessity" that attaches to the moments in the series is undermined. For any alteration x, that is, x is only "necessary" given the antecedent condition(s) from which it follows and on which it depends. In such a case, it is perfectly imaginable (possible) that "not x," particularly if it is possible that the antecedent conditions might not have been. It would seem that in such a case, all explanations would have to take the form of descriptive claims about how things "happen" to have turned out. In this sense, the fourth antinomy is not as concerned with an unconditioned causal beginning, so much as with reason's demand for explanation in terms of necessary connections.

Central to this argument is the suggestion that such a being is empirically necessary – that is, it is a being that must be itself part of, immanent in, and in this sense causally connected to the series. This is tantamount to arguing that either the world itself (as the unconditioned totality) must be necessary, or else that a necessary being exists as "part

of" the world in the sense that it is the "highest member of the cosmical series" (A461/B489). Again, Spinoza would seem to be a good example of this line of argumentation, for Spinoza's claim that the order of nature is absolutely necessary links up with his scientific worldview, and with his interest in subsuming phenomena under necessary laws.[71]

Against this, the antithesis asserts the impossibility of any necessary being whatsoever. The argument on this score seems to be much less problematic than that of the thesis.

SHOW: An absolutely necessary being nowhere exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause.

1 Assume the opposite: Either the world itself is necessary, or a necessary being exists in it.
2 If (1), then either a) there is a beginning in the series of alterations which is absolutely necessary and without cause, or b) the series itself is without any beginning and, as a whole, is itself absolutely necessary and unconditioned.
3 The claim that there is a beginning in the series of alterations which is absolutely necessary and without cause contradicts the "dynamical law of determination of all appearances in time," so not (a).
4 The claim that the series itself is simultaneously composed of contingent parts but is, taken as a whole, necessary is self-contradictory (the existence of the series as a whole cannot be necessary if no single member of the series is necessary), so not (b).
5 Therefore, not (2).
6 Therefore, if there exists some necessary being, it has to be outside the series as cause.
7 But (6) is impossible, for if the necessary being is to serve as cause of the series of alterations in the world, then it has to be a part of the temporal order as well, and this contradicts the assumption that the cause is outside the series.
8 Therefore, there can be no necessary being, where such is understood to be either the world itself or a being causally connected to the world. (A453/B481–A455/B483)

As may be obvious, the argument proceeds in a threefold manner. First, the postulation of a necessary being at the beginning of the series

71 See Edwin Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), chap. 2.

as cause conflicts with the claim that all appearances are determined in time. Second, the claim that the world whole itself is necessary is internally incoherent, because there is nothing over and above the contingent parts of the whole that could possibly ground necessity. Here, the antithesis appeals to the fact that in existence we do not ever come across any particular thing or event the nonexistence of which is impossible. Indeed, from the antithesis perspective, appearances (spatiotemporal objects) are to be construed as things as they really are, and in such a case, there is no necessity at all (A563/B591–A564/B592). Against the thesis, then, the antithesis denies the legitimacy of moving from the contingency of particular things to some absolutely necessary being. Thus, whereas the thesis seems to trade in on the fact that the "contingency" of empirical being leads us to the idea of a necessary being, the antithesis notes that this very same contingency undermines the suggestion that anything is necessary. Finally, the antithesis denies the possibility of a necessary being outside the world as its cause on the grounds that such a being would be nonsensible. The problem here stems not from the incoherence of an intelligible ground, but rather from its assumed (causal) connection to empirical or temporal existence. That is, the problem is with the move from the empirical to the nonempirical conditions.

As with the third antinomy, Kant's resolution to the fourth antinomy involves arguing for the compatibility of the two positions, given the transcendentally idealistic recognition that appearances are not things in themselves. On the basis of this, he contends that although a necessary being is not to be found as part of nature, it nevertheless might consistently be postulated as an intelligible ground outside the spatiotemporal series. For it is Kant's considered opinion that reason's demand for the unconditionally necessary being ineluctably imposes itself upon our reason, and indeed serves an indispensable function in securing the greatest possible unity of appearances (cf. A617/B645–A618/B646). Nevertheless, as the antithesis suggests, such a being can never be posited as part of the spatiotemporal series. Or as Kant himself puts it:

> Either, therefore, reason through its demand for the unconditioned must remain in conflict with itself, or this unconditioned must be posited outside the series, in the intelligible. Its necessity will not then require, or allow of, any empirical condition; so far as appearances are concerned, it will be unconditionally necessary. (A564/B592)

Even so, the idea of an absolutely necessary being seems to have a rather unique and problematic status for Kant. The problem is that the idea of an absolutely necessary being, like the idea of the sensible world as a whole existing in itself, appears to be in some sense internally incoherent for Kant. Its incoherence stems from the fact that although reason must posit or conceive of such a being, there is no particular (existing) object that is or could be given that could not also be consistently thought not to exist. The real argument for such a being, of course, is considered in the Ideal of Pure Reason, in connection with the discipline of rational theology, and to this we now turn.

7

RATIONAL THEOLOGY AND THE PSEUDORATIONAL IDEA OF GOD

The Ideal of Pure Reason is concerned with the arguments of rational theology. As with the paralogisms and the antinomies, Kant's ultimate aim in the Ideal is twofold. On the one hand, he argues that the idea of God is necessary and inevitable. On the other hand, he tries to show how any attempt on the part of speculative reason to determine this idea a priori (i.e., to acquire knowledge about the existence or attributes of God) is dialectical. In sections 2 and 3 of the Ideal, Kant attempts to account for the rational origin of the idea of God; in sections 4–6, he argues against the three species of argument for the existence of God: the ontological, cosmological, and physicotheological. But because Kant contends that the ontological argument is presupposed by the other two, and because a considerable part of Kant's critique is aimed at showing this, we limit our attention here to the criticism of this argument. After some preliminary remarks, the chapter considers Kant's account, in section 2 of the Ideal, of the origin and subreption of the idea of the *ens realissimum;* examines what I take to be Kant's effort to show that the metaphysicians' tendency to hypostatize and personify the above ideal of reason issues from the transcendental and illusory principle P_2, and its demand for an unconditionally necessary being; and examines Kant's criticism of the ontological argument.

Preliminary Remarks

Section 2 of the Ideal is notoriously difficult to follow and is, perhaps because of this, one of the most neglected and misunderstood portions

An early version of portions of this chapter appears in my "Kant's Rejection of Rational Theology," in *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress,* ed. Hoke Robinson (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995), pp. 641–650.

of the *Critique.* Of those who do devote their attention to Kant's argument in this section, many are particularly disturbed by his attempt to elucidate the "procedure of reason" in arriving at the ideal (A581/B609). Some dismiss Kant's efforts as a kind of "precritical" reversion to the dogmatic rationalist metaphysics of Baumgarten and Wolff.[1] Others criticize Kant for offering what is at best a dubious psychological account of the process by which individuals actually come to possess the ideal of God.[2] Consequently, it is important to be clear about exactly what Kant's aims are in section 2, where he claims to be "describing the procedure of reason" in its progress toward this ideal. As Allen Wood I think correctly notes, Kant's project is to be interpreted not psychologistically but as an attempt to show how the concept of God (a supremely real being) is inevitably encountered during the course of certain of our philosophical investigations. According to him, rather than showing how we actually come to have the idea of God, Kant's project is better described as one showing "why anyone who thinks philosophically had better have" such an idea.[3]

To the extent that he means that Kant is interested in tracing the idea of God back to its speculative (i.e., philosophical) sources, Wood is certainly correct. In doing this, however, Kant is trying to describe and account for the dialectic of reason, which leads us to move from certain necessary and acceptable principles to an ideal that carries an illusion of being objectively real. "But merely to describe the procedure of our reason and its dialectic does not suffice; we must also endeavor to discover the sources of this dialectic, that we may be able to explain, as a phenomenon of the understanding, the illusion to which it has given rise. For the ideal . . . is based on a natural, not a merely arbitrary idea" (A581/B607).

More than showing why anyone who thinks philosophically *ought to* have the idea of God, Kant's aim is to show how a natural (indeed necessary) *idea* of our reason gets transmuted into the assumption of an individual primordial being. As with the paralogisms, Kant would appear to want to argue that there is a transcendental ground that *constrains* us to move from a legitimate transcendental principle to something else

1 Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason,"* 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), pp. 522–526. Compare F. E. England, *Kant's Conception of God* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 120.

2 P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 221–223.

3 Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 62.

(the idea of God), which has the peculiar status of being subjectively necessary but not objectively real (cf. A340/B398). In accordance with this, Kant needs to provide us with an account of the necessity of the idea.

Unfortunately, however, Kant's account on this score is very difficult to make out. Indeed, at first glance he appears to offer at least two distinct and possibly incompatible "accounts" of the procedure of reason in regard to the acquisition of the idea of God, appearing respectively in sections 2 and 3 of the Ideal. Kant essentially argues in section 2 that the idea of God (i.e., the *ens realissimum*) is arrived at through our attempts to account for the pure possibility of particular things. For the present it may simply be noted that Kant is providing what we might, along with Wood, wish to characterize as a philosophical account of the origin of the idea of God. On this kind of reading, Kant would ostensibly be seen as showing how in the course of pursuing certain speculative or philosophical interests, we are inevitably led to entertain the idea of an *ens realissimum.*

In section 3, however, Kant provides what seems to be a *different* account of the origin of the idea of God. He again claims to be describing the "procedure of reason" (A587/B615), but here, in contrast to section 2, Kant argues that the idea of God (again, the *ens realissimum*) is arrived at simply because it best "squares with" our previously and apparently independently given demand for something that is "unconditionally necessary" (cf. A585/B613). Unlike the previous account, Kant would now seem to be offering what we might want to call a "transcendental account," arguing that the idea of God is generated because it answers certain demands of reason that make systematic knowledge necessary.

These two different lines of argument have been noted by Strawson, according to whom Kant provides two substantially independent attempts to show the very same thing, to wit, how the idea of God arises. According to Strawson, the argument in section 2 aims to show that the idea of God is one to which we are inevitably led "by the commonplace thought of every particular object of experience as having a thoroughly determined character."[4] The second account is characterized by Strawson as an attempt to show that the "idea of a supremely wise Author of Nature is a presupposition of natural science."[5] Even if we disagree with the way in which Strawson characterizes Kant's particular aims,[6] it does

4 Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense,* p. 221. 5 Ibid.

6 Because the principle of thorough determination holds of things in general, Strawson's

seem from what we have seen that Kant is offering two different accounts of the origin of the ideal.

There are a number of problems with this "two-accounts" view. The most obvious is that the presence of two independent and very possibly incompatible accounts of the origin of the "idea" of God undermines Kant's own claim to be tracing the idea back to the rational sources that make it necessary or even inevitable. Indeed, on this reading it sounds as if Kant either simply changed his mind midstride or else wanted to show that the idea may arise in one or the other (or both?) of two distinct ways. Worse than this, however, is the fact that the necessary "idea" in question seems to be different in each of the two accounts. In section 2, Kant seems set on showing that the necessary idea is that of a totality or an "all" of reality (*einem All der Realitat*), and this idea constrains us to conceive of an *ens realissimum.* In section 3, however, it is the necessity and inevitability of assuming that something is unconditionally necessary that motivates our acceptance of the *ens realissimum.* Prima facie at least, there is no reason to think that the idea of an "all" of reality is the same as the idea of something that is unconditionally necessary. But in this case, Kant has no cogent argument for his claim that the theological ideal is generated by or based on a necessary idea of reason, because there is no one clearly defined idea in the first place.

In light of these considerations, it seems highly unlikely that Kant intended sections 2 and 3 to be providing accounts of the very same thing. In fact, I believe that sections 2 and 3 constitute two stages in a single extended argument. In the first part (section 2), Kant wants to show that the ideal of God (an *ens realissimum*) is generated by or based on a natural or necessary idea of a *totum realitatis,* the totality of all reality. Here Kant's aim is to describe the rational origin of the idea of an *ens realissimum,* as well as the fallacy or subreption involved whenever we treat this idea as referring to an actual object. In the second part, section 3, Kant is concerned to show why, given the inappropriateness of

suggestion that the ideal process of thorough determination involves the "commonplace" thought of objects of experience (considered as such) is highly misleading. Moreover, his second suggestion (that Kant is trying to show that God is a presupposition of natural science) is really taken from the Appendix and Kant's discussion of the regulative use of the theological idea. But this has very little to do with Kant's present attempt to account for the rational origin of the idea. Here, Strawson errs in the same way that Walker does, by confusing Kant's account of the inevitability of the idea with his account of the regulative function of the idea. See Ralph Walker, *Kant: The Arguments of Philosophers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 140–141.

hypostatizing the idea, we are nevertheless somehow constrained to do so and, even further, to personify it.

This reading is supported by Kant himself. By way of transition from section 2 to section 3 he offers the following remark: "This ideal of the *ens realissimum,* although it is indeed a mere representation, is first *realised,* that is, made into an object, then *hypostatized,* and finally, by the natural progress of reason towards the completion of unity, is, as we shall presently show, *personified*" (A583/B611n). This passage indicates that in addition to revealing the *rational sources* of the representation of God, Kant intends to provide us with both a fairly detailed description and an account of the process by which a necessary idea is ultimately transformed into the traditional conception of a divine, supremely perfect, and necessarily existing God.[7] In order to make sense of this account, I begin with section 2.

The Idea of the *Ens Realissimum*

Kant begins his argument in section 2 by claiming that "Every thing as regards its possibility, stands under the principle of thorough determination according to which of all the possible predicates of things, in comparison with their opposites, one of them must belong to it" (A572/B600). Like Leibniz, then, Kant holds that the real possibility of a particular or individual *thing in general* rests on its thorough or complete determination with respect to all possible pairs of contradictory predicates.[8] This rational principle, presumably the rational counterpart to the category of community and the corresponding principle of coexistence, provides the basis for Kant's argument for the origin of the idea. The balance of the argument consists in the attempt to show that this principle of thorough determination requires the assumption of or presupposes the idea of an *ens realissimum.* Because Kant's transition from the principle of thorough determination to the "ideal" of the *ens realissimum* is difficult to sort out, I simply highlight the fundamental steps in this transition here. The movement is basically argued in four steps.

First Step. In order to apply the principle of thorough determination, we must, according to Kant, assume or think the totality of all possible

7 Presumably, this is explained, at least in part, by Kant's interest in accounting not only for the deistic but also the theistic conception of God.

8 For a discussion of the connection between Kant's arguments and Leibniz's theory of complete individual concepts, see Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* pp. 38–39.

predicates. Kant's claim is essentially that our efforts to thoroughly determine any *thing* (as opposed to any concept) require that the set of all possible predicates and their contradictory opposites be thought in their totality. Only by comparing each thing with the *total* set of such possible predicates, and by assigning either one predicate or its contradictory opposite to it, can we succeed in *thoroughly* determining or specifying the thing in question. Thus, according to Kant, the principle of thorough determination considers each thing "in its relation to the totality [*Inbegriff*] of all possibilities, i.e. the totality [*Inbegriff*] of all predicates of things" (A572/B600–A573/B601).[9] He puts this in another way by arguing that the principle of complete determination "contains a transcendental presupposition, i.e. that of the material *for all possibility,* which in turn is regarded as containing *a priori* the data *for the particular possibility* of each and every thing" (A573/B601). As such, the principle of complete determination, together with the idea of all possibility, is viewed by Kant as a transcendental presupposition of the logical principles of contradiction and excluded middle.

Implicit in this view is the familiar Kantian claim that logical principles by themselves yield no knowledge about things. As far back as the *Dilucidatio,* Kant criticized the Wolffians for attempting to deduce consequences from the formal principle of contradiction, arguing that the principle could only yield an affirmative or positive claim insofar as another (affirmative) principle was presupposed. Similarly, Kant suggests here that the transcendental presupposition of a totality of possible predicates is necessary in order to yield any complete positive determination of things. The totality of all possibility is for Kant a conceptual unity of reason, an idea or presupposition implicit in any use of the rational principle of determination. Kant himself sometimes speaks of the ideas as "analoga of schemata" (see Chapter 8), suggesting that they function as conditions for the application of various principles and maxims of reason. In the paralogisms, too, the idea of the soul provided a ground for assigning to the self various ascriptions. This general view, that ideas of reason function as presuppositions necessary for the direction of the understanding, provides the basis for the "transition" from the principle of thorough determination to what ultimately becomes the idea of God. Steps 2–4, then, constitute Kant's attempt to analyze out the essential features of this idea.

9 I have modified Kemp Smith's translation of *Inbegriff* from "sum-total" to "totality."

Second Step. At A574/B602 Kant next argues that the idea of a totality of all possibility is, as it were by definition, the concept of an individual (*einzelnen*) object that is completely determined – that is, it is an ideal of pure reason:

> Although the idea of a totality of all possibility, insofar as it serves as the condition of the complete determination of each and every thing, is itself undetermined in respect of the predicates which may constitute it, and is thought by us as being nothing more than the totality of all possible predicates, we yet find, on closer scrutiny, that this idea, as a primordial concept, . . . does define itself as a concept that is completely determinate *a priori*. It thus becomes the concept of an individual object which is completely determined through the mere idea, and must therefore be entitled an ideal. (A574/B602)

Although Kant's claim is very cryptically stated,[10] I take it that he simply wants to draw our attention to the fact that the idea of a totality of all possibility, because it is by definition all-inclusive ("contains," as it were, all *possible* predicates within itself) is singular – that is, is an idea of an individual entity. By its very nature, then, the "object" thought through the idea is fully determinate in the sense that there is nothing "left over" that would leave open the question about whether any further predicate could be "applied to" the totality. More specifically, in order to further determine it, there would have to be some set of predicates about which it would be legitimate to inquire whether or not they apply to the concept, as well as a procedure for so specifying it. But the idea of "all possible predicates" is precisely the substrate that contains all material for determination (i.e., it is the idea or archetype in terms of which the absolute possibility of a thing is thought), and the principle of thorough determination is itself the procedure for thoroughly determining any thing. Hence, we could not go beyond this concept in order to determine it further without already presupposing the concept. In a way analogous to the principle of apperception, we might want to say that the principle of thorough determination is the "vehicle" for all determination. A concept of an object that is completely determined through the idea alone is, of course, just what Kant means by an "ideal." The next step involves making the transition from a totality of all *possibility* to an "all" of *reality,* a *totum realitatis.*

10 England especially questions the move embodied in step 2. Cf. England, *Kant's Conception of God,* pp. 120–125. For a discussion, see Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* p. 57.

Third Step. Kant next suggests that the idea of such an individual object is nothing other than the idea of an "all" of reality: "if reason employs in the complete determination of things a transcendental substrate that contains . . . the whole store of material from which all possible predicates of things must be taken, this substrate cannot be anything else than the idea of an *omnitudo realitatis* [*von einem All der Realität*]" (A576/B604).

This move is generally explicated by noting the tight connection between "predicates" and reality. This connection is, of course, fundamental to rationalist metaphysics, and although he denies the rationalist identification of reality and *existence,* Kant clearly agrees with the rationalists on this score.[11] To determine a thing is to specify its reality by identifying which predicates are positively assigned to it. To do the latter is to omit those contradictory opposites of the predicates already constituting the reality of the thing in question. In the case where we are conceiving of the real possibility of an individual thing by *pure reason,* of course, we are abstracting from the necessary connection between "reality" (in the field of appearance) and sensation. This, however, is the only way in which the unconditioned or absolute totality of all reality can be thought.

Along different lines, Beatrice Longuenesse has attempted to explain this transition from a totality of all possibility to an all of reality by drawing on the epistemology of the Transcendental Analytic. She notes that in the Postulates of Empirical Thought, Kant defines "positive predicates" as predicates that agree with the sensible and intellectual conditions of experience.[12] From this, Longuenesse suggests that when, in the Ideal, Kant is talking about the comparison of the predicates of a thing with all possible predicates, he could on critical grounds accept such a comparison *providing* we mean by this the comparison of a thing only with the more limited set of predicates which "agree 1) with the forms of our intuition, 2) with the universal relations made possible in these forms by the categories and the schemata, and 3) with the present state of our empirical concepts."[13] Moreover, because we know from the Analytic that those empirical concepts which are "positive" determinations are realities, and that these in turn are taken to be what

11 The question is whether Kant endorses this connection in the same way that his rationalist predecessors do. This topic is discussed later.

12 See Beatrice Longuenesse, "Transcendental Ideal and the Unity of the Critical System," in Robinson, *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress,* p. 526.

13 Ibid.

corresponds to sensation, it follows that any positive determination is prior to any negative determination. The upshot is that determining an individual thing by comparison to the sum total of possible predicates is "reducible" to determining it by comparison to all possible *positive* predicates (i.e., realities), where the latter are understood as the Analytic's "predicates" that correspond to sensation. Hence, there is on Longuenesse's view "a perfectly legitimate critical reading for the move from the principle of complete determination to the supposition of a sum-total of all possibilities and from there to the supposition of a sum-total of all realities."[14] In this way, Longuenesse has "reduced" the idea of *all possibility* to the idea of *all reality* in a way that is consistent with Kantian tenets. She may, however, have reduced things too far. On her view, as we shall see, the *totum realitatis* is thus "reduced" to the idea of a totality of all possible realities corresponding to sensation.

The question is whether it is appropriate or indeed even necessary to import these Kantian tenets into this stage of the Ideal. One problem is that Kant is trying to account for the origin of the idea of an "all" of reality that is acceptable not only to himself but is also a central feature of rationalist metaphysics. On Longuenesse's account, the "all" of reality, properly or critically construed, is nothing more that the sum total of possible positive predicates (realities) that agree with the forms of our knowledge (as understood in the critical philosophy) and the "present state of our empirical concepts."[15] Corresponding to this "reduction" is another, for on her view the principle of complete determination is not a "new" principle at all, but essentially reiterates the already established doctrine that "the conditions of the possibility of experience are the conditions of the possibility of *objects of experience*."[16] It seems that the principle of complete determination is, then, for Longuenesse a principle for determining objects of experience, or appearances, and that the "all" of reality grounds the possibility of individuating *empirical* objects.

To be sure, this "all" of reality is, on Longuenesse's view, not actually given, but only discursively thought. Given its relation to space and time and to sensation, however, such an idea sounds rather like an "all" of (discursively thought) empirical reality.[17] The necessity of this more restricted conception she takes Kant to be defending in the Ideal. This has implications for her subsequent diagnosis of metaphysical error. Given her reading, the problem with rational theology is elegantly sum-

14 Ibid. 15 Ibid., p. 526. 16 Ibid. 17 Ibid., p. 527.

marized by Longuenesse as follows: The rational metaphysician erroneously takes this discursively thought whole or totality to be *given:*

> In the critical context this totum realitatis remains a mere idea: there is no given totality of positive predicates, the mere limitation of which would give us the complete determination of each singular thing. . . . So the representation of a totum realitatis as the complete whole of positive determinations of things can only be a goal which reason sets to the understanding for the improvement of its knowledge, not an actually given whole. The illusion of rational metaphysics is precisely to think that such a whole is actually given rather than having to be generated by the sensibly conditioned understanding.[18]

In order to account for this "illusion," Longuenesse basically draws on Kant's account, in section 2, of the "subreption" whereby a condition necessary for determining objects of the senses is erroneously taken to hold for things in general:

> The ground for this illusion is that in every one of our efforts to cognize empirical realities or empirical positive predicates of things, some *totum realitatis* must indeed be presupposed as existing. . . . But one should not confuse this experientially presupposed whole of reality with a discursively thought whole of realities or positive determinations.[19]

Longuenesse's view has a number of problems. First, she seems to be identifying the "illusion" that grounds the errors in metaphysics with the dialectical substitution that accompanies it in a misleading way.[20] Second, it is difficult to see exactly what the difference is between her "discursively thought" whole of realities and the "experientially presupposed" whole. Because the former has been reduced by her to that which corresponds to sensation, it is simply unclear how she would want to make this distinction.[21] More important, there seem to be problems with her suggestion that the rational principle of complete determination relates to the real possibility of empirical objects. For the principle

18 Ibid., pp. 526–527. 19 Ibid., p. 527.

20 Longuenesse does note that the rationalist metaphysician postulates the absolutely unlimited *totum realitatis* as given in accordance with the illusory principle that if the conditioned is given the unconditioned is also given. See ibid., p. 521. However, this point is not developed any further, and in fact her subsequent diagnosis of the illusion in the Ideal presumes that the dialectical substitution alone is the problem.

21 She admits this difficulty, but seems to respond to it by noting that Kant himself is ambiguous on various topics. Cf. ibid., p. 528.

of thorough determination in the Dialectic appears instead to relate to the "absolute" possibility of things in general. To understand this claim, we must return to the Postulates of Empirical Thought, which is precisely the text deployed by Longuenesse in her own interpretation.

In the Postulates, Kant does indeed take the real possibility of empirical objects to consist in the agreement of the concept to the formal conditions of experience. Certainly, there is no quarrel with Longuenesse on this point. The question, however, is whether this kind of possibility is at issue in the Ideal. I do not think that it is. Allen Wood has argued that the Dialectic is concerned with a different kind of "real" possibility.[22] He notes that the Postulates also make reference to another kind of real possibility, that is, "absolute possibility." The latter notion refers to the possibility of something that is really possible in *all respects,* and not merely possible relative to the conditions of our experience. Moreover, in the Postulates, Kant explicitly refers to the notion of absolute possibility as an idea of reason: "In fact absolute possibility (that which is in all respects valid) is no mere concept of the understanding, and can in no wise be of empirical use; it rather belongs to reason alone, which transcends all possible empirical employment of the understanding" (A231n/B284n).

Although Kant is by no means explicit, Wood has suggested that the discussion of thorough determination in the Ideal corresponds to the discussion of absolute possibility in the Postulates. In Wood's words, the possibility at issue in the Dialectic is "not merely a logical possibility, since its principle is not derived from the principles of general logic. It is, therefore, a kind of real possibility. But it is also a concept which 'belongs to reason alone' because it is a possibility which applies to things in general, independently of their relation to possible experience."[23] I think that Wood is correct here. Certainly, this reading accords with Kant's overall description of the content and purpose of the Transcendental Dialectic. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Dialectic is the investigation of a unique activity of thought, and the function is to examine the legitimacy of the ideas and principles that "have sprung from reason alone" (cf. A96/B352). In general, Kant's discussions of the ideas of reason draws on the notion that these ideas, as well as the illusion that grounds them, do not occur during the course of any *empirical* employment of the understanding, but issue solely from the nature of reason. Moreover, as we saw in preceding chapters, Kant claims that rea-

22 Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* pp. 6–48. 23 Ibid., pp. 46–48.

son's use of ideas is fundamentally linked up with its preoccupation with the "absolute," where the latter refers to that which is valid "in all respects" (cf. A325/B381).[24]

More telling, perhaps, is the fact that Kant explicitly and repeatedly refers to the principle of complete determination in the Ideal as a principle that holds for "things in general" (*Dinge überhaupt;* cf. A581/B609).[25] Even granting that he does not think that such a principle yields knowledge of any actual object, he does seem to think that reason inevitably postulates the *idea* of the complete determinability (the absolute possibility) of particular things (in general) and that this idea plays a necessary regulative role as a standard in light of which we conduct our empirical investigations.[26]

It might be thought that this view accords with Longuenesse's. After all, she does acknowledge that the discursively thought totality is not actually given but merely sets a task for the understanding. The problem, however, is that her discursively thought totality is itself a totality of realities as given to sensation under the conditions of experience. These considerations illuminate some of the problems with Longuenesse's characterization of the "idea" of the *totum realitatis*. Longuenesse's reading suggests that Kant neither does nor could accept the idea of an all of reality that is not understood in the more restricted sense as an all of (possible) empirical reality. This, however, does not seem to me to be adequate to capture the "idea" of an all-inclusive whole of reality with which Kant is concerned in the Ideal, for the totality of all reality is for Kant not limited to reality as possibly given in space and time. Indeed,

24 I discuss this conception of the Absolute in Chapter 5, in connection with the paralogisms.

25 Kemp Smith's translation is very misleading on this score. In speaking of the principle of thorough determination at A580/B608–A581/B609, he translates the passage in a way that suggests that Kant is only speaking about the "complete determination of things" (see Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 493). In fact, Kant is quite clear that the principle holds of "things in general." The passage runs as follows: "Denn die Vernunft legte sie nur, als den Begriff von aller Realitat, der durchgangigen Bestimmung der Dinge uberhaupt zum Grunde, ohne zu verlangen, dass alle diese Realitat objektiv gegeben sei und selbst ein Ding ausmache." Later in the same passage, Kant states that the principle refers to things in general (*Dinge überhaupt*). In both passages Kemp Smith translates the term as "things."

26 The role of the ideal as offering a condition that makes possible the complete determination of objects is stressed by Peter Rohs, "Kants Prinzip der durchgangigen Bestimmung alles Seienden," *Kant-Studien* 69 (1978): 170–180. See also Dieter Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis. Sein Problem and seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1960), p. 141.

Longuenesse's idea sounds much more like the idea of the "world" than that of God. The hallmark of the ideal, however, is that it is altogether beyond the totality of (even merely possible and discursively thought) empirical reality. As Kant himself tells us, the idea serves as the *ground* for that reality:

> Consequently, the derivation of all other possibility from this primordial being cannot, strictly speaking, be regarded as a limitation of its supreme reality, and, as it were, a division of it. For in that case the primordial being would be treated as a mere aggregate of derivative beings; and this, as we have just shown, is impossible, although in our first rough statements we have used such language. On the contrary, the supreme reality must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum; and the manifoldness of things must therefore rest, not on the limitation of primordial being itself, but on all that follows from it, including therein all our sensibility, and all reality in the field of appearance – existences of a kind which cannot, as ingredients, belong to the idea of the supreme being. (A579/B607–A580/B608)

That Kant himself does not want to "reduce" the necessary idea of an "all" of reality to the whole of empirical reality (even if only as discursively thought) seems clear when we consider his subsequent efforts to identify the ideal with both an archetype and the *ens realissimum*. These last identifications are crucial to understanding Kant's later efforts (in the Appendix to the Dialectic) to defend the necessity of the idea of God.[27] There, Kant does not simply argue that we must presuppose an idea of a whole of reality in space and time (the world) for theoretical purposes; he further argues that we must presuppose this sensibly conditioned whole to be itself dependent on something (a ground [*Grund*]) that lies *altogether beyond it,* and this is so if reason is to assign any purposiveness to nature.

> In the domain of theology, we must view everything that can belong to the context of possible experience as if this experience formed an absolute but at the same time completely dependent and sensibly conditioned unity, and yet also at the same time as if the sum of all appearances (the sensible world itself) had a single, highest and all-sufficient ground beyond itself, namely a self-subsistent, original, creative reason. For it is

27 Longuenesse, however, will not be able to account for the necessity of the idea of God. On her attempts to handle this problem, see "Transcendental Ideal and the Unity of the Critical System," p. 535. I think her response is unsuccessful.

> in the light of this idea of a creative reason that we so guide the empirical employment of our reason as to secure its greatest possible extension – that is, by viewing all objects as if they drew their origin from such an archetype. (A673/B701)

What Longuenesse's view seems to preclude is attaching any necessity to the idea of a supremely real being, which is the ground for but nevertheless in some sense *distinct from* the whole of empirical reality that she claims is only discursively thought.[28] In this, she seems to stop short of acknowledging that Kant defends not simply the idea of an "all of reality," but indeed an "all" of reality which is construed as a supremely real, individual, being, that is, the *ens realissimum*. Kant however, explicitly identifies the all of reality with the *ens realissimum*. Indeed, the movement from the idea of a totality of all reality to that of the *ens realissimum* constitutes the final important step (in section 2) of Kant's tortuous attempt to account for the idea of God.

Fourth Step. In the final step, Kant makes the connection between the foregoing idea of an all of reality and the *ens realissimum*:[29]

> But the concept of what thus possesses all realities is just the concept of a *thing in itself* as completely determined; and since in all possible [pairs of] contradictory predicates one predicate, namely, that which belongs to being absolutely, is to be found in its determination, the concept of an *ens realissimum* is the concept of an individual being. (A576/B604–A577/B605)

This statement of Kant's argument is, admittedly, very brief. It should be at least noted in passing that Kant's position has been subject to a number of criticisms. For example, both England and Kemp Smith find Kant's appeal to the traditional rationalist conception of the *ens realissimum* in this context to be problematic and indicative of a kind of "lapse"

28 Perhaps a good way to get at what Kant is driving at is to consider the position of Spinoza, for whom the "all" is both all inclusive but also contains a division between dependent being and the fundamental ground of dependent being (i.e., the order of nature). A conception like this is helpful to illuminate the movement from the "all" or totality of all reality and the supremely real being that lies at the ground of that totality.

29 Actually this is not presented as any real step in an argument; Kant simply moves from speaking of the all of reality to the *ens realissimum*. Nevertheless, I present it as a step precisely because it is the object of so much criticism. For a discussion, see Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, pp. 57–59.

back into a precritical (e.g., Wolffian) rationalism.[30] Bennett simply dismisses the whole argument as an "unconvincing tale."[31] It may be the problems associated with Kant's attempt to link the idea of the all of reality up to the *ens realissimum* that motivate Longuenesse's own reduction, for it is telling that she does not refer to Kant's *endorsement* of the concept of the *ens realissimum.* Rather, she seems to take the problem of rationalist theology to be *that it moves from* a perfectly legitimate (once critically reduced) conception of an all of reality *to* the idea of the *ens realissimum.*[32] I do not wish to downplay the difficulties involved in this move. Indeed, even despite Kant's claims to the contrary,[33] it hardly needs to be said that the argument as a whole is in need of a great deal more explicit argumentation than he himself provides. Part of the problem is that Kant seems to waver in his own characterization of the *ens realissimum.* On the one hand, it is clear that Kant does not think that the necessity of the idea of an "all" of reality provides any basis whatsoever for the claim that the *ens realissimum* exists. On the contrary, he consistently argues that the ideal of God, like the ideas of the world and the soul, does not correspond to any existing object that could be given to us. Thus, in speaking of the "object" of the ideal of reason, Kant argues that it is "present to us only in and through reason" (A579/B607). And although he suggests that we can legitimately conclude that this "object" is an *ens originarium, ens summun, ens entium,* he quickly points out that such terms do not signify "the objective relation of an actual object to other things, but of an *idea* to concepts" (A577/B605–A579/B607). Indeed, according to Kant, we are "left entirely without knowledge as to the existence of a being of such outstanding pre-eminence" (A579/B607). Similar claims are made throughout section 2. For Kant, any use of the transcendental idea of God as an object of transcendental theology oversteps the "limits of its purpose and validity":

> For reason, in employing it as a basis for the complete determination of things, has used it only as the concept of all reality, without requiring that

30 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 522; England, *Kant's Conception of God,* p. 120. Walsh apparently agrees; see *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* p. 219.

31 Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 282.

32 Longuenesse, "Transcendental Ideal and the Unity of the Critical System," p. 521.

33 In the *Prolegomena,* Kant essentially claims that the observations on rational theology in the *Critique* are so "intelligible, clear and decisive" that there is no need for any further discussion. Unfortunately, none is offered. *Proleg.* 4:348–349; 96.

> all this reality be objectively given and itself be a thing. Such a thing is a mere fiction in which we combine and realize the manifold of our idea in an ideal, as an individual being. But we have no right to do this, nor even to assume the possibility of such an hypothesis. . . . it is solely as aiding in their determination [i.e., the complete determination of things] that the idea has been shown to be necessary. (A580/B608–A581/B609)

On the other hand, it seems clear that Kant wants to defend the legitimacy of the idea not simply of a totality of possible empirical reality qua discursively thought, but of the *ens realissimum* construed as the primordial and supremely real individual being.[34] As we have seen, Kant does argue that the idea of the *ens realissimum* (the supreme being) is necessary. Indeed, Kant suggests that the problem is not that we move from the idea of a totality of all reality to that of the *ens realissimum,* but rather that we are not entitled to take our legitimate and necessary idea of the *ens realissimum* to refer to any actually existing (given) object. This makes sense, given Kant's denial that thinking the realities (predicates) of a thing by reason is tantamount to positing its actual existence. In fact, he suggests that although reason is constrained to represent this idea of a totality or an all of reality as an individual primordial being, in doing so it falls victim to subreptive thinking and "hypostatizes" the idea in a way that is delusive.

Kant's description of the error that leads us to this hypostatization is difficult in the extreme. He seems to think that a *number* of errors contribute to the adoption of the traditional rationalist view. As a matter of fact, it sounds as though Kant wants to suggest that when we "hypostatize" this idea of the sum of all reality, we are falling into *three distinct errors:* (1) we substitute dialectically for the distributive unity of the empirical employment of the understanding, the collective unity of experience as a whole; (2) we then think the whole of appearance as one single thing that contains all empirical reality in itself;[35] and (3) by

34 Because of this, it is important to separate the function of the *ens realissimum* from the *omnitudo realitatis* itself. See Wolfgang Cramer, *Gottesbeweis und ihre Kritik. Prufung ihre Beweiskraft. Die Absolute Reflexion,* vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), pp. 148–152. See also Mario Caimi, "On a Non-Regulative Function of the Ideal of Pure Reason," in Robinson, *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress,* pp. 539–549.

35 Although I do not argue for it presently, I assume that this dialectically thought whole is the "world." In fact, I think that part of the complexity of Kant's account of the origin of the idea of God is that he thinks that it is demanded by reason given the rational necessity of thinking both the world as a *totum syntheticum* and the necessity of the unconditionally necessary being.

means of the above transcendental subreption (i.e., error 1), we substitute for the whole of appearance (i.e., error 2) the concept of a thing that stands at the source of the possibility of all things and supplies the real conditions for their complete determination (cf. A583/B610). This in turn suggests that the diagnosis of the dialectical line of thinking that grounds the Ideal is more complicated than Longuenesse acknowledges. But this account still needs to be "filled out." How does this error come about, and what exactly is being hypostatized?

These issues are not always sufficiently distinguished by Kant. It is clear that he wants to argue that the hypostatization of the idea of supreme reality at some level *involves* a transcendental subreption according to which we apply an a priori principle that has only empirical use independently of the empirical conditions that ground its use. In this case, what presumably happens in the Ideal is analogous to what had happened in the paralogisms, where the principle of apperception was subrepted into the hypostatized consciousness (see Chapter 4). Here, in the Ideal, the erroneously deployed principle states that "Nothing is an object for us unless it presupposes the sum of all empirical reality as the condition of its possibility" (A582/B610). As a theoretical assumption relating to objects of experience, this principle is certainly acceptable to Kant. For even though the possibility (thinkability) of empirical objects of our senses consists in their relation to our thought, all matter of appearance must also be assumed to be given in one "single and all-embracing" whole of experience (A582/B610). The subreption comes in, it seems, when we fail to distinguish or conflate the conditions for determining objects of the senses with the purely rational procedure for determining objects in general. Thus, according to Kant:

> No other objects, besides those of the senses, can, as a matter of fact, be given to us, and nowhere save in the context of a possible experience; and consequently nothing is an object *for us,* unless it presupposes the sum [*Inbegriff*] of all empirical reality as the condition of its possibility. Now owing to a natural illusion we regard this principle, which applies only to those things which are given as objects of our senses, as being a principle which must be valid of things in general. Accordingly, omitting this limitation, we treat the empirical principle of our concepts of the possibility of things, viewed as appearances, as being a transcendental principle of the possibility of things in general. (A582/B610)

Kant's complaint is that, although we may be entitled to presuppose the sum of all empirical reality in one whole of space and time, we are

not further entitled to assume that the rationally thought totality of all possible predicates is in any way given. To do so is to confuse the "distributive" unity (the unity presupposed for the empirical employment of the understanding) with a collective unity (a unity postulated by reason).[36] If this is Kant's view, the problem is that we extend this condition for determining possible objects of experience and take it to hold for any object whatsoever; in so doing, we convert a principle that holds only for appearances into a principle that holds for "things in general and in themselves," which suggests that this principle of possible experience is being subject to a transcendental use. Similarly, in the Discipline Kant tells us that "to make principles of possible experience conditions of the possibility of things in general is just as transcendent a procedure as to assert the objective reality of [transcendental] concepts, the objects of which cannot be found anywhere save outside the limits of all possible experience" (A781/B809–A782/B810). As such, Kant's account of the subreption in the Ideal also bears an affinity with the earlier fallacy of subreption in the *Dissertation*. There, Kant argued that the first of the subreptic axiom "forms" involved taking the conditions that determine the possibility of *intuiting* objects to be conditions for the real possibility of any object whatsoever (in general). Insofar as we do this, we erroneously subject intellectually thought concepts of objects in general to sensible conditions that only hold for appearances. As I argue in Chapter 3, Kant continues to reject any attempt to subject pure concepts (concepts of objects in general) to the conditions that allow for our sensible experience of objects. Here, in the Ideal, Kant seems to be arguing against the attempt to do just this and, moreover, he seems committed to the view that the pure possibility of things in general as thought by reason is independent of and not to be confused with the thought of their "empirical" possibility.

To apply the rule or principle for determining empirical objects to objects in general would involve a transcendental employment of the understanding. Thus, the rejection of the "dialectical substitution" harkens back to Kant's complaints, in the Analytic, about the transcendental employment of the understanding and the conflation of ap-

36 I think Longuenesse is simply wrong to identify the collective unity about which Kant is speaking with the "experientially presupposed" unity of experience. Kant is quite explicit throughout the Dialectic that although the unity of the understanding is distributive, the unity of reason is collective, and he seems to mean by the "collective unity," a unity of reason under the presupposition of P_2.

pearances and things in themselves. This judgmental error comes about when the understanding is not duly curbed by criticism (see Chapter 4). In this sense, we may agree with Longuenesse, that Kant's criticisms (at least with repect to the dialectical substitution) essentially reiterate the claims in the Amphiboly chapter.

The question, however, is how this judgmental error and the resulting transcendental employment of the understanding are to relate to Kant's efforts to define the ideal, to account for the idea of reason, the *ens realissimum*. On Longuenesse's account, the story seems to stop here. The illusion consists precisely in this dialectical substitution and the subsequent assumption that the "whole" as thought discursively is given. I do not think that this is so. As we have seen, Kant argues that the error is many-sided, and the dialectical substitution is only one piece of the puzzle. The subsequent error comes in because we then substitute this misconstrued whole (now dialectically thought through the transcendental employment of the understanding) with "the concept of a thing which stands at the source of the possibility of all things, and supplies the real condition for their complete determination" (A583/B610). Where did this latter idea come from? It seems to be independently generated by reason in its attempts to thoroughly determine all things. More specifically, reason moves from the dialectically thought whole of appearance (the world) to the idea of that which grounds it. The inference to the *ens realissimum* as given thus issues from certain interests of reason and from the illusory P_2, which expresses those interests. Although Kant does not, in section 2, elaborate on this part of his position, it can nevertheless be said that the *ens realissimum* has its own unique source in reason and its propensities toward transcendent applications of thought. I suggest that this interpretation accords with Kant's own characterization of the ideas of reason. The *ens realissimum* is, in an illusory fashion, itself represented as given, albeit only given to reason, in the idea. Its conflation with a totality that is given in space and time is all the more seductive precisely because the movement to this idea, although grounded in an illusion, is nevertheless subjectively necessary.

This reading seems to clarify another exegetical puzzle that relates to the Ideal. As is well known, in the Dialectic Kant abandons the attempt to demonstrate the actual existence of God by means of the "possibility proof." Recall that in both the *Dilucidatio* and the *Beweisgrund* arguments (both from the precritical period), Kant intends to establish the actual existence of God as an absolutely necessary being by the argu-

ment from possibility (see Chapter 2). Very briefly, Kant's argument was designed to show that the existence of God must be granted as the necessary condition for all possibility in general (see Chapter 1). In the *Critique,* however, Kant denies that any such argument is capable of proving the existence of God. Nevertheless, Kant rather mysteriously seems to appeal to the very same "possibility proof" from these earlier works in section 2. In the Ideal, however, his intent seems to be to establish not the actual existence of God but the necessity of the *idea* of the *ens realissimum.* In fact, as we have seen, Kant thinks that the idea is requisite for supplying a basis for the complete determination of things in general.

Wood has pointed out that this strategy raises questions about the status of the earlier possibility proof and its purpose in the argument of the *Critique.* Wood explains its presence as an attempt on Kant's part to account for the continued "natural appeal" of a proof that he (Kant) had already been forced to reject.[37] It appears that this same view is held by Walsh.[38] The point seems to be that even though Kant now rejects the reasoning of the possibility proof, he somehow cannot bring himself to deny that it is deeply compelling. But it seems more likely that Kant does not really reject the line of reasoning at work in the "possibility proof" at all; rather, he simply rejects the suggestion that this line of reasoning justifies the conclusion that "God exists." The appeal to the argument from possibility in the *Critique* simply reveals Kant's efforts to reinterpret the argument along critical lines. In accordance with this, Kant intends to show that, although the possibility proof does not establish God's *existence,* it nevertheless does suggest that the *idea* of God is subjectively necessary. To understand this claim, we may examine the basis for Wood's suggestion that Kant wants to reject the argument from possibility altogether.

In the *Critique* the rejection of this proof is evidenced, Wood suggests, by Kant's claim about dialectical illusion. After all, section 2 provides us with an account of the rational origin of the Ideal, and at the heart of that account is the claim that the idea of the *ens realissimum* is illusory. This in turn suggests that Kant wants to abandon the legitimacy of the possibility proof altogether. Wood contrasts this view with the position offered in the *Lectures on Rational Theology.* There one finds, in Wood's words, a "more complex and more sympathetic" (and, for Wood, "more disturbing") handling of the possibility proof. Here Kant argues (mysteriously, it seems to Wood) that even though the possibil-

37 Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* p. 75. 38 Walsh, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics,* p. 219.

ity proof is "unable to establish the objective necessity of an original being," it nevertheless shows that such a being carries a certain "subjective necessity."[39] Indeed, according to Kant, "we are justified in assuming and presupposing an *ens realissimum* as a necessary transcendental hypothesis."[40] Because of these claims, Wood sees a certain "incompatibility" between the *Critique* and the *Lectures*. Whereas the *Critique*, on Wood's view, rejects all reasoning from the possibility proof as illusory, the *Lectures* are presented as wanting to salvage the conclusion of the argument as "subjectively necessary." Moreover, Wood is not alone in the view that there is an incompatibility between these two general claims. England, for example, sees Kant as waffling back and forth between two different aims, the positive and negative.[41]

On the interpretation offered here, in contrast, these two lines of argument are not only compatible, but are crucial to Kant's overall position – briefly stated, that a subjectively necessary idea is, because of a transcendental illusion, taken to embody or express an objective necessity. Ultimately, Kant will want to show how transcendental illusion also grounds our subsequent attempts both to identify the *ens realissimum* with an unconditionally necessary being and to acquire determinate knowledge of God. But for now, note that Kant can consistently maintain *both* that the ideal of an *ens realissimum* is subjectively necessary (even in its illusory guise as an idea that has objective validity) *and* that any attempt to treat this idea as itself an object of possible knowledge (i.e., as having objective reality) is dialectical. This, it seems to me, is exactly how Kant does argue.

The interpretation I am offering is grounded in the contention that the illusion that leads to the hypostatization of the ideal is itself subjectively necessary. More specifically, because Kant takes the transcendental illusion that grounds the disciplines of traditional metaphysics to be subjectively necessary, he can simultaneously criticize the dialectical attempt to acquire actual knowledge of the "objects" thought in accordance with the interests of reason, while continuing to uphold their necessary status as ideas in light of which we seek to further our knowledge. Thus, although the two positions in the *Critique* and *Lectures*

39 Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology,* p. 76.

40 Cf. *Lectures on Philosophical Theology,* trans. Allen W. Wood and Gertrude M. Clark (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 68.

41 England, *Kant's Conception of God,* esp. pp. 194–196.

might seem to be completely distinct and incompatible as treatments of rational theology, they are in fact consistent. We have already seen in our discussions of the paralogisms that Kant wants to distinguish between the ideas, subjectively regarded as necessary hypotheses, postulations, or maxims (on the one hand), and "objectively regarded" as concepts of objects, that is, concepts having objective reality (on the other). Kant's position is that the ideas of reason, considered subjectively, and in relation to particular bodies of knowledge, are necessary and legitimate, although when their meaning and use are misconstrued, and they are thought to provide an occasion for knowledge of an actual object, they are the sources of error.

The positive function or usefulness of transcendental illusion and the ideas in their "subjectively necessary" guise are fully discussed in the next chapter. At this point, however, it is important simply to note that this same "model" is operative in the Ideal. As we have seen, Kant wants to show that such an idea is "natural," indeed, necessary, if we are to account for the pure and absolute possibility of *things in general* (A581/B609). But what is said to be necessary in this regard is not God *qua* object of transcendental theology (i.e., not an actually existing primordial Being), but rather, the idea of God, as the thoroughly philosophical conception of a supreme reality, ultimately construed as having unconditionally necessary existence. This ideal, according to Kant, provides "the supreme and complete material condition of the possibility of all that exists, the condition to which all thought of objects, so far as their content is concerned, has to be traced back" (A577/B605). Even so, in deploying this ideal, reason does not "presuppose the existence of a being that corresponds to this ideal, but only the idea of such a being, and this only for the purpose of deriving from an unconditioned totality of complete determination the conditioned totality i.e. the totality of the limited" (A578/B606)

If I am correct, then section 2 is to be construed as Kant's effort to demonstrate the subjective necessity of the idea of the *ens realissimum,* while at the same time bringing to our attention the judgmental errors involved in assuming that the object thought through our idea is actual. Although section 2 repeatedly links the errors to transcendental illusion, what it does not do is to identify the illusion with the errors themselves. Moreover, section 2 gives us no account of why the supremely real being is taken to be unconditionally necessary, the being of rational theology. To these topics we now turn.

Transcendental Illusion and the Unconditionally Necessary Being

As we saw in the preceding section, Kant takes the idea of a supremely real being to be one to which we are inevitably led in our attempts to think about the possibility of things by pure reason, without any reference to the conditions of the empirical use of the understanding.[42] Kant warned against the tendency of conflating the idea implicit in this attempt (the totality of reality) with the presupposed sum of empirical reality requisite for the empirical employment of the understanding. Such a conflation, Kant claimed, was generated by dialectically substituting a principle for the empirical employment of the understanding with the transcendental principle of complete determination. Although this account might seem (as Longuenesse suggests) to describe "the" illusion, in fact Kant suggests that this erroneous use of the principle is itself the *product* of illusion:

> Now, owing to a natural illusion [*Nach einer natürlichen Illusion*] we regard this principle which applies only to those things which are given us as objects of our senses, as being a principle which must be valid of things in general. Accordingly, omitting this limitation, we treat the empirical principle of our concepts of the possibility of things, viewed as appearances, as being a transcendental principle of the possibility of things in general. (A582/B610)

Not immediately clear is whether the illusion *just is* the "hypostatization," or whether the illusion is the "dialectical substitution of the collective unity for distributive unity" (i.e., the "subreption"), or again, whether it is something entirely different from either of these. Without downplaying the obvious and serious textual ambiguities as regards the relation between transcendental illusion and the metaphysical errors,[43] I argue that Kant does want (and need) to distinguish this description of the subreption from the transcendental illusion proper, which motivates it. In fact, this distinction goes hand in hand with Kant's efforts to distinguish the transcendental illusion and the illusory ideas of reason from the transcendental misemployment of the understanding (see Chapter 4). It also relates to my earlier claim that Kant is offering a two-

42 Cf. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, p. 48.

43 Kant is simply ambiguous as to whether the dialectical arguments are generated by an illusion or themselves generate an illusion. This is so throughout the Dialectic.

step argument. I earlier suggested that although Kant seemed to be offering two different accounts of the origin of the ideal of God, his argument was most profitably seen to provide two stages in one extended argument. In the first part, as we have just seen (section 2), Kant wants to show not only that the idea of the *ens realissimum* is subjectively necessary, but also why any use of it as a concept of a really existing object is unjustified. In section 3, Kant wants to show why this idea is nevertheless hypostatized. As textual evidence for this interpretation, I first point to the tentative, almost hypothetical, nature of Kant's claims about the hypostatization of the idea in section 2:

> If, in following up this idea of ours, we proceed to hypostatize it, we shall be able to determine the primordial being through the mere concept of the highest reality. (A580/B608)

> If we thereupon hypostatize this idea of the sum of all reality, it is because we substitute dialectically, etc. (A582/B610–A583/B611)

The tentative nature of Kant's claims suggests that he is offering a description of what should occur *given* the hypostatization of the idea of supreme reality. Even given the assumption that such hypostatization involves or is grounded in a dialectical substitution (i.e., a subreption), such an account does not provide for what motivates the error in the first place. Moreover, Kant *does not offer* the preceding account of the hypostatization of the idea as a sufficient or complete account of the "illusion" that generates it. Indeed, the prefatory remarks in section 3 suggest the contrary:

> Notwithstanding this pressing need of reason to presuppose something that may afford the understanding a sufficient foundation for the complete determination of its concepts, it is yet too easily conscious of the ideal and merely fictitious character of such a presupposition to allow itself, on this ground alone, to be persuaded that a mere creature of its own thought is a real being – were it not that it is impelled from another direction to seek a resting place in the regress from the conditioned, which is given, to the unconditioned. (A584/B612)

Although Kant does not explicitly say as much, it is clear that what is "impelling" the hypostatization of the idea of reason is, on his view, the transcendental and illusory principle, P_2. This principle leads us to assume that our demand for unconditioned unity of thought can be satisfied "objectively," that the "unconditioned" that provides both the ex-

planatory and metaphysical "closure" to our inquiries is actually given. This demand for the unconditioned, moreover, is precisely what grounds the dialectical substitution outlined in section 2. That Kant takes P_2 to be what motivates the move to the idea of God as a real object/Being is clear throughout section 3. In addition, Kant repeatedly claims that the idea of God is one to which we are led by reason's need for unconditioned unity of thought:

> This unconditioned is not, indeed, given as being in itself real, nor as having a reality that follows from its mere concept; it is, however, what alone can complete the series of conditions when we proceed to trace these conditions to their grounds. This is the course which our human reason, by its very nature, leads all of us. (A584/B612; cf. A584/B612n)

Here we have what I take to be the second stage in Kant's argument. He seems to say that by P_2 we are drawn to conclude, from the assumption of anything's existing, to the existence of an absolutely necessary being. It is the need to postulate the existence of an absolutely necessary being that, according to Kant, motivates all three of the arguments of rational theology, for each of these aims to establish the necessary connection between the concepts of necessary existence and the *ens realissimum*. In fact, precisely this need (engendered by P_2) to postulate this connection between necessary existence and "supreme reality" that is said to ground the previously described transcendental subreption. This is also presumably what grounds the upcoming proof for God's existence, for in the Discipline we are told that such a proof is "based solely on the coincidence [*Reziprokabilität*] of the concepts of the most real Being and the necessary Being, and is not to be looked for anywhere else" (A789/B817). But Kant's further view is that these two conceptions coincide in our idea of God precisely because of the influence of P_2.

Implicit in Kant's account seems to be the suggestion that the transcendental and illusory principle of reason, P_2 ("If the conditioned is given, . . . the absolutely unconditioned is also given") leads us inevitably to the idea of an unconditionally necessary being. Indeed, the postulation of an absolutely necessary being would seem to mark the highest or most supreme instantiation of reason's theoretical demand for an absolute and complete systematic unity of thought, for it is here that all explanatory efforts presumably come to rest in an absolutely unconditioned ground. According to Kant, the absolutely necessary being is "that which in its concept contains a therefore for every wherefore" (A585/B613). Despite its importance, Kant's views with respect to the

notion of an absolutely necessary being are complicated. On the one hand, he consistently argues that the idea of a necessary being is "unavoidable," "inescapable," and "necessary." In Kant's words:

> If we admit something as existing, no matter what this something may be, we must also admit that there is something which exists necessarily. For the contingent exists only under the condition of some other contingent existence as its cause, and from this again we must infer yet another cause, until we are brought to a cause which is not contingent, and which is therefore unconditionally necessary. This is the argument upon which reason bases its advance to the primordial being. (A584/B612)

In accordance with this, as we saw in the preceding chapter, Kant suggests that the idea of an unconditionally necessary being ineluctably imposes itself upon our reason and serves an indispensable function in securing the greatest possible unity of appearances (A617/B645–A618/B646). In the Ideal, Kant refers to the idea of the supreme being as an "ideal without a flaw, a concept which completes and crowns the whole of human knowledge" (A642/B670). On the other hand, Kant wants to deny that we have any clear conception of any particular being whose nonexistence is impossible. Indeed, according to Kant, it is not contradictory to deny the existence of God (cf. A595/B623–A596/B624). Kant's ambivalence with respect to the idea of a necessary being is also notable in the *Lectures on Philosophical Theology,* where Kant is reported to have referred to the idea of a necessary being both as something that we "need indispensably as a final ground for all things," and also as the "true abyss for human reason."[44] Indeed, Kant is there reported to have called the problem of the absolutely necessary being "an insoluable problem for human reason."[45]

It is precisely our inability to conceive concretely of a being that satisfies the requirements for absolute necessity, and our inability to "give up" the notion of some absolutely necessary being nonetheless, which motivates the movement from the idea of the *ens realissimum* to the idea of God in rational theology. One way of making sense of this claim is as follows. We know from the fourth antinomy that the argument for a necessary being as a ground of all empirical reality (the totality of all appearances) is generated by reason's inherent need to seek the unconditioned for all change, or contingent being, in the world. The antinomy left us with an impasse, however, and led to the postulation

44 Wood and Clark, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology,* p. 64. 45 Ibid., p. 65.

of such a necessary being "outside" the series. The way in which P_2 generates the idea of God would thus seem to be a function of the need to postulate this necessary being as the intelligible ground of the "world itself" and, in so doing, to identify it with the *ens realissimum.*

> The concept of an *ens realissimum* is therefore, of all concepts of possible things, that which best squares with the concept of an unconditionally necessary being; and though it may not be completely adequate to it, we have no choice in the matter, but find ourselves constrained to hold to it. For we cannot afford to dispense with the existence of a necessary being; and once its existence is granted, we cannot, in the whole field of possibility, find anything that can make a better grounded claim [than the *ens realissimum*] to such preeminence in the mode of its existence. (A586/B614)

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, it appears that sections 2 and 3 of the Ideal constitute two stages in a single extended argument that attempts to account for the origin and hypostatization of the idea of the *ens realissimum,* and which seeks to show that we are driven by the illusory P_2 to identify this idea with that of a necessary being. In the section entitled "Discovery and Explanation of the Dialectical Illusion in all Transcendental Proofs of the Existence of a Necessary Being," Kant explicitly argues that it is the "dialectical but natural illusion" that *gives rise to* (causes) both the connection of the concepts of necessity and supreme reality, and the realization and hypostatization of the idea (A615/B643). Whereas the cosmological and physicotheological arguments are said to attempt to argue from the assumption that there is an absolutely necessary being to the claim that such a being is the *ens realissimum,* the ontological argument clearly attempts to derive necessary existence from the concept of an *ens realissimum.* To see what is wrong with such an attempt, we need to consider the ontological argument.

The Ontological Argument

Kant's criticism of the ontological argument begins with a reiteration of some of the claims about the "absolutely necessary being" that were made in section 3. Thus, although he admits that the inference to an absolutely necessary being is "imperative," "legitimate," and "required by reason" (presumably because of P_2), he is careful to refer to the concept of such a being as "a mere idea" of pure reason, whose objective reality is far from ever having been proved. This point is already famil-

iar to us. We have already seen Kant claim that although the transcendental idea is a "quite necessary product" of the "laws of reason" (P_1/P_2), we can never have any concept of an object corresponding to it (cf. A339/B397). In accordance with this, Kant says of the ideal that, "while the inference . . . to some absolutely necessary being seems to be both imperative and legitimate, all those conditions under which alone we can form a concept of such necessity are so many obstacles in the way of our doing so" (A593/B621).[46] This suggests that the illusory nature of the ideal is taken by Kant to have already been shown. Kant's current efforts will be to show how any attempt to determine (acquire knowledge of) this illusory idea involves misusing concepts (i.e., transcendental misemployments of thought), and how the arguments purporting to do so are fallacious. In this sense, the diagnosis of error with respect to the ontological argument is essentially in line with the diagnosis offered in connection to the paralogisms. There, Kant demonstrated that (1) because the idea of the soul is illusory, (2) the attempts to determine the idea are fallacious and dialectical.

Considerations of this sort provide the background for Kant's criticism of the ontological argument. The argument is presented by Kant in the following way:

> We may be challenged with a case which is brought forward as proof that in actual fact . . . there is one concept, and indeed only one, in reference to which the not-being or rejection of its object is in itself contradictory, namely, the concept of an *ens realissimum*. It is declared that it possesses all reality, and that we are justified in assuming that such a being is possible . . . Now [the argument proceeds] "all reality" includes existence; existence is therefore contained in the concept of a thing that is possible. If then, this thing is rejected, the internal possibility of the thing is rejected – which is self-contradictory. (A597/B625)

Although the most celebrated and commonly cited of Kant's objections is his claim that that being or existence is not a real (determining) predicate, it should be said that Kant actually offers a number of apparently distinct criticisms of this argument. Kant's first complaint is that it is contradictory to introduce the concept of existence into "the concept of a thing which we profess to be thinking solely in reference to its possibility" (A597/B625) – which suggests that the problem in-

46 Because of this, Kant calls into question not the idea of an absolutely being but rather the "assumption" that there really are "absolutely necessary subjects" (A593/B621).

volves the conflation of possibility and *actuality*. Despite this, Kant goes on to claim that the argument confuses two kinds of *possibility* (logical and real) (cf. A579/B625n). In addition to these criticisms, Kant suggests that the argument (and specifically the erroneous use of "existence" as a real predicate) confuses logical with real predicates (A598/B626). Add to this the fact that Kant seems to suggest that the category of reality is being used improperly, that the pure category of existence is being subject to a transcendental misemployment (A598/B626), and his suggestion that the real problem concerns the fact that we are dealing with an object of pure thought, whose existence simply cannot be known (A602/B630), and we have a surprisingly complicated picture of what is supposed to be "the" dialectical error involved in the argument. It is reasonable to expect that embedded in all of these claims is an account that intends to show that the ontological argument is both logically fallacious and the result of a dialectical misemployment of thought. In addition, I have already suggested that the argument is grounded in an illusion according to which the transcendental idea of supreme reality is taken for an object. Thus, I focus here on showing how this variety of claims is compatible with Kant's general theory of the illusions and the fallacies of the Dialectic.

Much of the confusion can be clarified by first noting that Kant is really criticizing two very different lines of argument, both of which he takes to be characteristic of rational theology. On the one hand, he is criticizing the attempt to argue from the merely "logical possibility of concepts to the real possibility of things." Although it could certainly be argued that Descartes is guilty of this error, we shall see directly that Kant takes Leibniz to be the primary culprit here. On the other hand, Kant is criticizing the "ontological argument proper," which seeks to establish the necessary existence of God simply from the concept of a supremely real being. On this point, the argument of Descartes is at issue. Kant himself concludes his critique of the ontological argument by noting the different aims of these two philosophers. Because of its importance in distinguishing between the different objects of Kant's criticism, I cite a rather large portion of the relevant (concluding) passage here:

> The concept of a supreme being is in many respects a very useful idea; but just because it is a mere idea, it is altogether incapable, by itself alone, of enlarging our knowledge in regard to what exists. It is not even competent to enlighten us as to the *possibility* of any existence beyond that which is known in and through experience. . . . and thus the celebrated Leibniz is far from having succeeded in what he plumed himself of

> achieving – the comprehension a priori of the possibility of this sublime ideal being.
>
> The attempt to establish the existence of a supreme being by means of the famous ontological argument of Descartes is therefore merely so much labor lost. (A602/B630)

Kant is arguing against Leibniz's tendency to argue from the mere thinkability (noncontradictoriness) of the *concept* of the necessary being to the real possibility of the being itself. As we saw in Chapter 2, Kant's arguments in the Amphiboly chapter are designed to undermine this conflation of conceivability with real possibility (also see Chapter 3). In fact, for Leibniz, the very possibility of the necessary being is "sufficient to produce actuality."[47] "God alone (or the Necessary Being) has this perogative that if he be possible he must necessarily exist, and, as nothing is able to prevent the possibility of that which involves no bounds, no negation, and consequently, no contradiction, this alone is sufficient to establish a priori his existence."[48]

Leibniz had already criticized the ontological argument of Descartes on the grounds that it was only acceptable if it could be shown that no contradiction results from supposing that all realities coexist in the same subject. Toward this end, Leibniz claimed to show that all realities can indeed be combined in the same subject.[49] In this, Leibniz takes himself to have shown that the *ens realissimum* is really possible. Although Kant would agree that the concept is noncontradictory, he denies that we are justified in assuming that the *ens realissimum* is itself possible on these grounds alone. In order to establish the real possibility of the *ens realissimum,* according to Kant, we would have to establish "the objective reality of the synthesis through which the concept is generated."

Even though, on Kant's view, Leibniz is guilty of conflating merely logical possibility (thinkability) with real possibility, he presumably would agree with Leibniz that Descartes's ontological argument gets its momentum from the assumption of the real possibility of the *ens realissimum.* Nevertheless, Kant's real purpose is to show that *even if* we grant this illicit assumption, the ontological argument can be shown to be defective by a transcendental account.

For present purposes, Descartes's argument may be put in the following syllogistic form:

47 Cf. Leibniz, *Monadology,* section 44, p. 260.
48 Ibid., section 45, pp. 260–261.
49 Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters,* ed. L. Loemker (Dordrecht, 1969), p. 167.

1 The *ens realissimum* is a being that possesses all realities.
2 A being that possesses all realities necessarily exists.
3 Therefore, the *ens realissimum* necessarily exists.

Although Kant is by no means explicit about it, the argument can be characterized as committing the dialectical fallacy of *ambiguous middle.* The ambiguity centers on the notion of a "being which possesses all realities." As before, in the major premise this notion is used transcendentally, although in order to draw the desired metaphysical conclusion, it must be taken empirically in both the minor premise and conclusion. The phrase is employed transcendentally in the major premise precisely because it is used in abstraction from the subjective conditions of sensibility. In the major premise, the *ens realissimum* is the mere concept of a being in general that possesses all realities. To say of such a being that it "possesses" all realities is simply to say that in its concept nothing is "lacking of the possible real content of a thing in general" (A600/B628–A601/B629). It is obvious, however, that the conclusion seeks to establish the actuality (i.e., the real existence) of the supremely real being, which is undertaken by construing the "being" in the minor premise as a real object that "possesses" all realities not simply by the connection of logical predicates to a subject-concept but, indeed, because it takes the being to be an actual object to which real (determining) predicates can be synthetically attached.

Although this account is far from complete, it does indicate that Kant's rejection of rational theology, like his rejection of rational psychology and rational cosmology, is based on two claims: (1) that the rational idea (in this case of God) carries with it a certain unavoidable illusion that grounds the subsequent attempt to determine the idea through the categories, and (2) that this last attempt is to be understood as a distinct judgmental error that can be avoided. The distinction between these two projects, however, leaves open the possibility that the illusory ideas may continue to play a role in Kant's philosophy even after he has undermined the metaphysical disciplines based upon them. I have argued throughout that this is precisely Kant's intention. In the next chapter, I hope to make some sense of the role of the ideas in Kant's "critical" philosophy.

IV

ILLUSION AND SYSTEMATICITY

8

THE REGULATIVE EMPLOYMENT OF REASON

I have suggested from the outset that any interpretation of Kant's "negative" or critical handling of metaphysics in the Dialectic must be balanced by an understanding of the positive account of the illusory principles and ideas of reason. As we have seen, Kant's account of metaphysical error includes a distinction between the unavoidable or inevitable *illusions* and the *fallacies* (or the dialectical application of the categories) that are contained in the metaphysical arguments. In the Discipline, Kant refers to the sphere of pure reason as an "entire system" of such "illusions [*Blendwerken*] and fallacies [*Täuschungen*] intimately bound together and united under a common principle" (A711/B739–A712/B740). This common principle is, I believe, the illusory P_2, the principle that "if the conditioned is given, the absolutely unconditioned is also given." I have suggested that Kant takes it to ground not only the illusory hypostatization of the ideas but also the transcendental misemployment of the understanding. This reading not only allows us to avoid the charges of inconsistency levied against Kant's "inevitability thesis," but it also secures a "place" for Kant's upcoming account of the positive function of the ideas and principles (and, indeed, the illusion) of reason. In connection with the latter, Kant argues that even though the *metaphysical conclusions* are dialectical and erroneous, the ideas that motivate them have and retain some indispensably necessary role. In this chapter, I discuss this "positive account." After offering some preliminary remarks about the overall structure of the Appendix, I discuss the general demand for systematic unity and the problems associated with its transcendental status, argue that the status

Parts of this chapter appear in early form in my "Kant on the Illusion of a Systematic Unity of Nature," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (1997): 1–28.

of this principle is to be understood in terms of Kant's arguments for a "unity of reason," and discuss the connection between this claim and Kant's theory of science.

Preliminary Remarks

By now it should be clear that Kant maintains that *some* set of rational principles or concepts is required in order to secure the unconditioned systematic unity of thought prescribed by reason. Moreover, given the earlier account of reason as a faculty of principles, the defining activity of which is to seek the unconditioned, this claim is straightforward enough. Certainly, it is possible to see in some very general sense how Kant could view the ideas as correlates of the activity of thinking the totality or "unconditioned" in relation to the three modes of thought outlined in the Analytic (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Less believable, however, is Kant's subsequent attempt to resurrect the very same ideas whose use had been so successfully undermined during the course of the Dialectic. Yet his intention is made clear throughout the Appendix to the Dialectic. Having assessed and rejected the metaphysical interpretation (the transcendent use) of the transcendental ideas of reason, Kant undertakes to secure their "good and proper" use. That the ideas must have such proper (immanent) use is apparently guaranteed, for Kant, by the fact that they arise from the very nature of our reason (A643/B671). This same claim is made at A669/B697, where Kant repeats his view that the ideas have their own good and appropriate vocation. In connection with this we are repeatedly told that the ideas of reason "lead us to systematic unity" (A645/B673; A671/B699) and, moreover, that this defines their "final purpose" (A680/B708).

Unfortunately, however, Kant's account of just exactly *how* the ideas are supposed to be necessary for the systematic unity of knowledge is extremely difficult to ascertain.[1] Indeed, as is so often the case, Kant himself seems to be offering two distinct kinds of responses to this ques-

1 Kant's failure to make this clear is very well documented in the secondary literature. See W. H. Walsch, *Kant's Criticisms of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), section 41, esp. pp. 244–249; P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 229; Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason,"* 2nd ed., rev. and enlarged (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), esp. pp. 457–558; Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 211.

tion. In the first part of the Appendix (A643/B671–A669/B697), he appears to be primarily interested in establishing the general claim that (scientific) investigations into nature as such require and presuppose some kind of fundamental assumption about systematic unity. Here, Kant's account centers on the attempt to show that scientific theorizing proceeds in accordance with a set of three principles (of *homogeneity, specification,* and *affinity*), which, as it were, offer criteria for unifying the variety of scientific knowledge into one ideal system. The account itself suffers from a number of ambiguities. For the present, we may simply note that Kant nowhere so much as mentions the specific transcendental ideas (the soul, the world, God) that were the object of his explicit critique throughout the Dialectic. Indeed, it is not until the second half of the Appendix that Kant returns to an explicit discussion of the ideas in question. There, in a section entitled "On the Final Purpose of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason" (A669/B697–A732/B704), Kant apparently seeks to establish that the three transcendental ideas serve as maxims that somehow guide our empirical inquiries. Although he is not at all clear on this issue, it does seem that Kant views the three transcendental ideas as presuppositions that direct our unification of knowledge into scientific theory. More specifically, he suggests that the idea of the soul grounds empirical investigations in psychology, the idea of the world grounds physics, and the idea of God grounds the unification of these two branches of natural science into one unified Science (cf. A684/B712–A686/B714).[2]

One very basic exegetical problem, then, has to do with the ostensible connection between these two accounts. In fact, the problem can be more specifically viewed as one that concerns the connection between Kant's account of the role that the general idea or principle of systematicity plays in empirical investigations into nature, and his attempt to assign a positive, regulative use to the three particular transcendental ideas. Not surprisingly, commentators who are especially interested in Kant's theory of science tend to focus on the first account, downplaying the other claims about the three transcendental ideas.[3] In

2 Again, Kant is not altogether clear on this issue. He does, however, suggest that the "nature" relevant to the regulative use of reason is to be divided into psychology and nature in general. In this connection, Kant also suggests that the idea of God regulates the unification of these two branches by grounding a kind of "cosmology." For a discussion of the use of these three ideas in these ways, see MacFarland, *Kant's Concept of Teleology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), p. 26.

3 For examples, see Thomas Wartenberg, "Reason and the Practice of Science," in *The Cam-*

this connection, the discussion usually (and legitimately so) turns to the third *Critique* and the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science,* with the arguments in the Appendix for the most part being interpreted from the point of view of these other works.

Others, however, tend to view Kant's position vis-à-vis the ideas as one aspect of the more general problem in Kant's transcendental epistemology that concerns the "necessity" of thinking the thing in itself.[4] Viewed as such, the problem of the necessity of the ideas may be seen to be the "rational" counterpart to Kant's earlier attempt to establish the necessity of thinking the noumenon in the negative sense. As we saw in Chapter 3, Kant argued that the concept of the thing in itself was methodologically entailed by the doctrine of transcendental idealism. Kant's claims about the necessity of thinking the ideas of reason might, then, be viewed in a way somehow analogous to this, as asserting the necessity of thinking the noumenon at another level, or in another way. Indeed, Kant sometimes suggests that the ideas of reason might provide the basis for certain "transcendental hypotheses" that can be used (negatively) to diffuse the dogmatic pretensions of those who think themselves capable of ruling out intelligible explanations simply by appealing to experience (cf. A776/B804–A782/B810). Clearly, Kant wants to maintain *both* that just as we are constrained to think the thing in itself, so too, we are somehow constrained to conceive of the ideas of reason; *and* like the concept of the thing in itself, which seems to serve the purely negative function of marking off the noumenal domain, the ideas of reason also have a useful negative function. The problem is that Kant also (and often) suggests that reason and its ideas have some kind of positive (regulative) function in the domain of natural science. Once again, it would be useful to distinguish between Kant's efforts to show that systematicity *in general* is immanent in scientific inquiry and his efforts to account for the role of ideas as presuppositions necessary for introducing this systematicity.

bridge Companion to Kant, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 228–248; Philip Kitcher, "Projecting the Order of Nature," in *Kant's Philosophy of Physical Science,* ed. Robert Butts (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1986), pp. 210–235; Paul Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment: Kant on the Significance of Systematicity," *Nous* 24 (1990): 17–43, as well as his and Walker's articles of the same title, "Kant's Conception of Empirical Law," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* suppl. (1990): 220–242 and 243–258. All of these individuals avoid any real discussion of Kant's claims about the transcendental ideas. An obvious exception to this is Gerd Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), esp. pp. 522–530.

4 This approach to the problem is undertaken by Pippin, in *Kant's Theory of Form,* chap. 7,

This, however, has proved difficult. Although Kant is basically interested throughout the Appendix in the (singular) demand for systematic unity, he actually introduces and considers a number of very *different* ideas and principles, each of which may provisionally be held to perform some regulative role in securing systematic unity of knowledge.[5] Kant's tendency to argue for so many different principles has caused considerable confusion and makes it very difficult to determine the exact status of the general demand for unity. For example, at A645/B673 Kant speaks of the need or idea of complete systematic unity of *thought* or *knowledge* (cf. A647–648/B75–76). But whereas this systematic unity would appear to be an epistemological or "subjective" notion (it involves a unity of representations, or thought), Kant also, and oftentimes without any other apparent distinction, speaks of the systematic unity of *nature* (A651/B679; A694/B722), of *natural kinds,*[6] and even of *objects themselves* (cf. A651/B679). Although these last formulations clearly suggest that the idea of systematic unity commits Kant to a completely distinct metaphysical or "objective" claim, Kant views these two formulations of the problem as necessary correlates. *Whatever way* he characterizes this *general* claim about systematic unity, however, his view is further complicated by the suggestion that such unity is in turn effected by, or perhaps specified through, any one or more of a number of different presuppositions, principles, maxims, and/or ideas.

Some of these have already been noted. In the first part of the Appendix Kant maintains that the previously mentioned "principles," or "maxims" of homogeneity, specification, and affinity serve to secure the systematic unity of scientific knowledge. Kant goes so far as to identify these as "principles of systematic unity" (*Prinzipien der systematischen Einheit;* A662/B690). Although it is somewhat confusing, we have also already seen that Kant wants to argue that the transcendental ideas function in very much the same way. We may now note that Kant also assigns a similar function to the principle or presupposition of the purposiveness of *nature* (cf. A694/B722–A696/B724), the purposive unity of

esp. pp. 188–215. Bernard Roussett discusses the ideas under the topic of transcendental objects in chapter 2 of his *La Doctrine kantienne de l'objectivité* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967).

5 Guyer notes that Kant is operating with a number of distinct "regulative ideas" in his "Reason and Reflective Judgment," pp. 19–24. I disagree with Guyer's identification of the logical demand for systematic unity and the principle of affinity.

6 Kant does not use this phrase, but his classificatory examples imply this. Guyer notes this as well; see "Kant's Conception of Empirical Law," p. 225.

things (A686/B714), the idea of a maximum (A665/B693), the idea or presumption of a ground or substratum (A696/B674), the idea of a supreme intelligence (A687/B715), and even to a variety of what may be called theoretical entities (A646/B674; A650/B678).

Unfortunately, Kant does not always clearly distinguish between or connect these various terms.[7] On the contrary, a great deal of the time he simply appears to view each of these as an expression of *the* demand for systematic unity (cf. A649/B677; A658/B686; A665/B693; A687/B715). The first thing in need of clarification, then, is the status of this demand for unity and its relation to the employment of the understanding.

The Demand for Systematic Unity

Considered in its most general or logical form, the demand for systematic unity is already familiar to us from Chapter 4 as the formal principle P_1. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Kant characterizes reason as an activity of thought that itself may be articulated in terms of the subjective law: *Find for the conditioned knowledge given through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion* (A308/B364). One of the greatest difficulties with Kant's position in the Appendix is that it seems ambiguous as regards the "status" of this prescription to seek unity.[8] The central aim of the Appendix is, of course, to articulate the positive function of this demand, or principle, of reason. The problem is that Kant's position is stated with so many qualifications that it is difficult to see what it actually is. Indeed, at first glance, it seems that Kant is dreadfully inconsistent and obscure in his characterizations of the demand for unity. It is, according to Kant, in some loose sense empirically applicable, but not constitutive; it is a mere maxim, but also a necessary law. In addition to these claims, the demand for systematic unity is said to be "merely regulative" but at the same time somehow necessary for the employment of the understanding.

This combination of seemingly inconsistent claims has fueled many of the most common criticisms of Kant's position on the regulative employment of reason. Kemp Smith evidently speaks for many when he

7 Thus, the idea of systematic unity is identified with purposiveness (cf. A694/B722), and both the transcendental ideas and the idea of a maximum are said to provide the analoga of schemata. See Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Science,* pp. 496–530.

8 For a discussion of just this issue, see Walker, "Kant's Conception of Empirical Law," p. 245.

charges Kant with extreme self-contradiction.[9] For Kemp Smith, the problem centers on Kant's tendency to waver between these two positions. According to him, it is simply untenable to maintain both that the ideas or principles of reason have only a *subjective,* methodological necessity and that they are necessary for experience. Again, Kemp Smith is not alone in this view. In fact, this problem has already been encountered in the preceding chapter: Kant is charged with the same kind of inconsistency due to his desire to maintain that the idea of the *ens realissimum* was both subjectively necessary and yet not objectively valid. The diverse array of commentators seemingly united on this point with respect to the Appendix includes, among others, England, Walsh, Horstmann, and Guyer.[10]

Fortunately, most of these ambiguities can be clarified by recalling the doctrine of illusion from Chapter 4. First, the entire Appendix presupposes both the theory of reason and the associated doctrine of transcendental illusion that had been introduced at the beginning of the Dialectic (cf. A293/B350). Moreover, each of these accounts actually finds its culmination in the Appendix, where Kant, after having curbed the pretensions of both the understanding and sensibility, sets out to define the domain of reason's proper employment.[11] In fact, in the Appendix Kant most directly attempts to connect the formal characterization of reason as a faculty of principles (articulated in P_1) and the doctrine of illusion. To understand the connection between P_1 and the doctrine of illusion, we may simply recall that such illusion is said to consist in our taking the subjectively necessary demand that we seek unity of thought to be an objective necessity extending to objects (A297/B354). According to Kant, then, transcendental illusion is manifested precisely in the unavoidable conflation of the subjective or logical maxim P_1 with another, synthetic, principle P_2 (*If the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions . . . is also given;* A308/B365). In accordance with such a conflation, Kant claims that we fail to distinguish between the principle in its transcendent or "unrestricted" meaning, and the same principle as it must be interpreted as a rule for the employment of the understanding.

9 Kemp Smith, *Commentary,* p. 547.

10 F. E. England, *Kant's Conception of God* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), pp. 194–196; Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics,* pp. 244–249; Ralph P. Horstmann, "Why Must There Be a Deduction?" in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions,* ed. Ekhart Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 157–176, esp. pp. 165–169.

11 Susan Nieman discusses this positive function as well in *The Unity of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 43–45.

Kant's preliminary account of transcendental illusion was thus formulated in terms of a "slide" from one way of taking or interpreting this principle (P_1) to another (P_2).[12] In the Introduction to the Dialectic, this "slide" was presented only in barest outline. Indeed, it is evident that Kant there merely "posed the problem" of moving from the subjective law of reason to the transcendental principle. Because of its relevance, I cite the passage again in full:

> Take the principle, that the series of conditions (whether in the synthesis of appearances, or even in the thinking of things in general) extends to the unconditioned. Does it, or does it not have objective applicability? What are its implications as regards the empirical employment of the understanding? Or is there no such objectively valid principle of reason, but only a logical precept, to advance towards completeness by an ascent to ever higher conditions and so to give to our knowledge the greatest possible unity of reason? Can it be that this requirement of reason has been wrongly treated in being viewed as a transcendental principle of pure reason, and that we have been overhasty in postulating such an unbounded completeness of the series of conditions in the objects themselves? (A309/B366)

As I have already argued, precisely this assumption of P_2 (i.e., this transcendental illusion) provides the transcendental ground of the formal fallacies of metaphysics.[13] Despite the fact that Kant has already shown how the principle cannot be used to ground the metaphysical arguments, however, the issue of its own status *independent of this* particular use has yet to be addressed. Consequently, the questions posed in the preceding passage have not yet been sufficiently answered, and so the legitimacy of the "slide" has not been determined. This is particularly apparent in the Appendix, where Kant again takes up the issue of whether, in addition to the logical principle P_1, we are justified in assuming P_2. Here, however, Kant's position has confused many, for he seems to argue in two ways.

First, we find Kant stressing throughout the Appendix that the demand for unity (P_1) is nothing more than a *logical* or subjective maxim,

12 See Chapter 4. This account of the slide is reminiscent of the argument in the *Dilucidatio;* see Chapter 1.

13 It is important to keep in mind that the term "formal fallacy" refers not only to the diagnosis of logical invalidity but also to the dialectical (transcendental) misemployment of the concepts of the understanding. Both, of course, refer to an error in judgment at the level of the understanding. Both are to be distinguished from the correlated error at the level of reason, i.e., transcendental illusion. See Chapter 4.

a formal requirement or precept of reason. This view is familiar to us from the Introduction to the Dialectic, where Kant claims that the logical maxim of reason "does not prescribe any law for objects, and does not contain any general ground of the possibility of knowing or determining objects as such" (A306/B363). Rather, Kant tells us, it is merely a "subjective law for the orderly management of the possessions of the understanding," which lacks any "objective validity" (A306/B363). This same view appears again in the Appendix at A648/B676, where Kant claims the following:

> The systematic unity of the manifold knowledge of the understanding, as prescribed by reason, is a *logical* principle. Its function is to assist the understanding by means of ideas, in those cases in which the understanding cannot by itself establish rules, and at the same time to give to the numerous and diverse rules of the understanding unity or system under a single principle, and thus to secure coherence in every possible way.

These considerations seem to suggest that, as Horstmann has argued, Kant's real aim in the *Critique* is specifically to deny any transcendental status whatsoever to the principle of systematicity.[14] This is certainly consistent with Kant's emphatic assertion that the principles of reason are only methodological principles (A648/B576). Although it is not immediately clear how they function as methodological principles, one way of reading this claim is to say, along with Guyer, that Kant's assertion of methodological necessity is, in the first *Critique,* little more than a restatement of the claim that the principles of reason are merely formal or logical.[15] In accordance with this, Kant's distinction is supposed to undermine the attempt to view or use the demand for systematic unity as anything other than a merely logical or conceptual prescription, one that neither is objectively valid nor expresses an objective necessity. According to this view, the principle of systematic unity would be viewed merely as a heuristic device, something akin, perhaps, to the principles of convenience in the *Dissertation.*

As we saw in Chapter 2, in section 30 of the *Dissertation* Kant introduces a set of three principles that clearly prefigure the *Critique's* demand for systematic unity.[16] Like the subjective demand for systematic

14 Horstmann, "Why Must There Be a Deduction?" p. 168.

15 Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment," pp. 30–33.

16 The principles in question are (1) All things in the universe take place in accordance with the order of nature; (2) Principles are not to be multiplied beyond what is neces-

unity in the *Critique,* the principles of convenience (or harmony)[17] are held to be delusive in the sense that they seem to have an objective status even though they rest merely on "subjective grounds" (2:418; 89). Once again, like the principle of systematic unity in the *Critique,* the use of these principles of "harmony" is justified methodologically despite their delusive character. In the *Dissertation,* such principles oftentimes appear to be defended as purely heuristic principles on the grounds that they rest on the "conditions under which it seems to the intellect easy and practicable to use its own perspicacity" (2:418; 89–90).[18] In a way similar to this, the arguments in the *Critique* sometimes seem to assign just such a "heuristic" status to the principle of systematic unity.[19] Thus, in speaking of the principles of systematic unity, Kant says "They can also be employed with great advantage in the elaboration of experience as heuristic principles [*als heuristische Grundsätze*]" (A664/B692). Compare this with Kant's claim in the Discipline, where he suggests that the ideas are "thought only problematically, in order that upon them (as heuristic fictions [*als heuristische Fiktionen*]) we may base regulative principles of the systematic employment of the understanding in the field of experience" (A771/B799–A772/B800).

In spite of this, Kant elsewhere suggests that the merely logical and heuristic interpretation of reason's function does not succeed, for the fact that it might be convenient *for us* to systematize *knowledge* in no way justifies our actual assumption that *nature itself* conforms to our need for systematic unity and completeness:

> It might be supposed that this is merely an economical contrivance whereby reason seeks to save itself all possible trouble, a hypothetical at-

sary, and (3) No matter at all comes into being or passes away. See Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* (2:418–419; 89–92).

17 G. B. Kerferd and D. E. Walford translate *principia convenientiae* as "principles of convenience" (*Kant: Selected Pre-Critical Writings and Correspondence with Beck* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968]), but the term is translated as "principles of harmony" by Walford (in collaboration with Meerbote) in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 414. Although I have relied previously on the Kerferd and Walford translation of the Latin, the use of the term "harmony" seems more consistent with Kant's intentions in these sections of the *Dissertation.*

18 An example of this rather common (subjectivist) reading of the *Dissertation* is found in Kemp Smith. See his *Commentary,* p. 548. I disagree with this reading but cannot argue against it here.

19 Guyer in "Reason and Reflective Judgment," p. 33; Patricia Kitcher suggests the heuristic reading as well in her book, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 225–230.

> tempt, which, if it succeeds, will, through the unity thus attained, impart probability to the presumed principle of explanation. But such a selfish purpose can very easily be distinguished from the idea. For in conformity with the idea everyone presupposes that this unity of reason accords with nature itself, and that reason – although indeed unable to determine the limits of this unity – does not here beg but command. (A653/B681)

Thus, to the great consternation of his readers, Kant frequently asserts that the regulative use of the principle of reason (presumably as P_1) is grounded in its transcendental status (as P_2). Indeed, he suggests either that we *must* presuppose a corresponding transcendental principle or even worse, that the (logical) demand, maxim, or prescription for systematic unity is, "becomes," or at least presents itself to us as, itself transcendental.[20] Following are some of the most notorious passages:

> But this logical maxim can only *become* a principle of *pure reason* through our assuming that if the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions . . . is likewise itself given, that is, is contained in the object and its connection. (A308/B365)

> It is indeed difficult to understand how there can be a logical principle by which reason prescribes unity of rules unless we also presuppose a transcendental principle whereby such a systematic unity is a priori assumed to be necessarily inherent in the objects. (A651/B679)

> We must therefore, in order to secure an empirical criterion, presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679–A652/B680)

Things get worse from here. Whereas he denies of the logical maxim any objective validity whatsoever, Kant suggests that the principles of systematic unity do indeed have "objective but indeterminate validity" (cf. A663/B691–A664/B692). Given these apparent shifts in Kant's position, it is not surprising that a great deal of the secondary literature on the Appendix is devoted to an attempt to articulate *what Kant's position is*. The problem seems to be reduced to that of determining *which* of the principles of systematic unity is supposed to be "the" necessary principle. Admittedly, it is one thing to say that the necessary principle is

20 I take it that this is exactly the point of the description of the principle as illusory and more specifically, of it in terms of optical illusions.

the purely "logical" P_1, which is subjectively but not objectively necessary, and subjectively but not objectively valid. It is quite another to say that the necessary principle in question is the transcendental principle P_2. The latter principle expresses an objective necessity, and so presents itself as having *some kind* of objective validity and applicability. Given Kant's own earlier distinction between these, and his own account of the slide from P_1 to P_2, it is indeed very strange to think that he should be endorsing both of these principles simultaneously. Thus, those who do recognize Kant's desire to argue for this stronger version find themselves in the very difficult position of trying to make sense of what Horstmann has called the "very unKantian" notion of a "merely regulative yet transcendental" condition.[21]

I take it that there is a legitimate sense in which Kant can endorse both of these claims, given that P_1 and P_2 relate to two different ways of viewing the same necessary demand for unity. If this is correct, then it is not inconsistent for Kant to maintain *both* that the demand, principle, or maxim for systematic unity, viewed in abstraction from the restricting conditions of the understanding, is a transcendental principle of pure reason *and* that its (necessary) application to the manifold, which requires its restriction to the conditions in question, renders it "merely prescriptive" for the understanding. The key point here is that, as I suggested in Chapter 4, P_1 and P_2 express the very same unifying function, or the *very same act of reason,* viewed in different ways. Close examination of Kant's claims supports this reading, for the logical maxim, or logical rule, is always used to characterize the systematic unity of the manifold *knowledge of the understanding* as it is prescribed by reason, whereas the transcendental principle refers to an a priori postulation of pure reason independent of any such knowledge. Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter 4, Kant clearly takes P_2 to be a transcendental presupposition, or what may be referred to as an "application condition," of P_1.[22] It is a principle (or a presupposition) that articu-

21 See Horstmann's, "Why Must There be a Deduction?" p. 259 n. 10. Instances of this attempt can be found in Brandt, "The Deductions in the Critique of Judgment: Comments on Hampshire and Horstmann," in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions,* ed. Eckhard Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 177–190; Walker, "Kant's Conception of Empirical Laws"; see also his *Kant,* pp. 141–143, 170–177; Wartenberg, "Reason and the Practice of Science," pp. 228–248.

22 The idea that it is an "application condition" clearly ties in with Kant's various statements about the ideas being analoga of schemata; they serve, like schemata of the understanding, as the conditions under which the concepts can be applied.

lates the goal in light of which we undertake the systematization of the knowledge of the understanding. As such, P_2 is necessary in order to deploy the formal demand for systematicity in relation to the "objective" contents of the understanding. It provides reason with the basis for a real, as opposed to a merely logical, use.

This reading explains why Kant seems to move back and forth between these "competing" characterizations of the demand for systematic unity, and it suggests that rather than viewing these different characterizations as exclusive alternatives, it is best to take Kant at his word on both points. As Kant himself says, "Reason proceeds by one path in its empirical use, and by another path in its transcendental use" (A563/B591). This view may also assist us in making sense of Kant's claim that principles of reason have only a regulative and never a constitutive status. The distinction between the regulative and the constitutive is most profitably viewed as describing two different ways of interpreting the claims of reason. In accordance with this, a principle of *reason* is taken to be constitutive, in Kant's sense, just in case it is held to supply a concept of a real object (A306/B363; A648/B676). This interpretation is, of course, precluded by Kant's critique, and by his characterization of reason as a faculty having no application to objects themselves. Here, the denial that reason is constitutive seems most consistent with Kant's efforts to show that the postulation of a unity of nature cannot be taken to ground any *metaphysical* claim about either nature or objects themselves. What it can, and does do, for Kant is function regulatively by grounding the possibility of investigating nature in accordance with the *idea* of such unity. This position, it seems to me, is tantamount to claiming that the regulative function of the principle of systematic unity is itself parasitic upon the transcendental and illusory postulation that nature, as an object of our knowledge, is already given as a complete whole.

Even so, Kant's position with respect to the regulative use of principles is complicated. Kant once again seems to be appealing to two distinct but very closely related senses of the regulative "use" of a principle. Sometimes, in arguing that the use of a principle or idea is "merely regulative," Kant simply seems to intend the negative claim that it is *not constitutive,* and hence that it does not either refer to any real object or determine any such object. Other times, however, in arguing that the principles of reason are of "indispensably necessary" regulative use, he clearly intends to make the different and stronger claim that they can nevertheless be shown to have a unique *positive* role as methodological

principles that set goals for, and thus guide, the employment of the understanding. Kant's position is made difficult precisely because he maintains that a nonconstitutive principle nevertheless presents itself to us as objective (as P_2) and *in this capacity* plays a necessary role in regulating the operations of the understanding. This view translates into the assumption that the absolute or unconditioned unity of nature obtains objectively and provides us with an "object," the knowledge of which we ought to seek. Insofar as the understanding operates in accordance with such an assumption, it "acts" in conformity with P_1. Certainly, one thing Kant is concerned to express is the fact that, although the principle of systematic unity is necessary and unavoidable, it remains merely subjective in the sense that it is grounded in and expresses interests and goals that are unique to reason.

In line with this, Nieman has suggested that regulative principles "concern our needs and capacities and are grounded in the same."[23] Given this, the problem (according to Nieman) is that we tend to disparage the use of ideas that have no objective reference and thus tend to assume that our ideas do positively refer. To do this is to succumb to transcendental illusion. The fact that Kant himself often appears to defend the "objective" (transcendental) versions of the regulative principles simply goes to show, on Nieman's view, that he himself was not immune from the errors and illusions that he sought to reject.[24] If I am correct, however, it is central to Kant's notion of a regulative principle of reason that it is grounded in the illusory postulations of reason. More specifically, the prescription to seek unity or systematicity remains merely formal and, in Kant's view, vacuous, in the absence of any motivating idea of the goal to which we aspire. As we shall see, the ideas (as "analoga of schemata") function precisely to provide us with the vision that guides our efforts for systematicity, for the prescriptive function of reason's principle is itself grounded in certain transcendental postulations or ideas. The regulative status of these principles is thus intimately linked up with the fact that they carry with them a certain "subjectively necessary" illusion. Because such ideas are illusory, they can only serve as standards in terms of which we conduct our inquiries.

The doctrine of illusion is the product of Kant's attempt to defend this view. Kant's account involves pointing out that reason is an essentially projecting activity. I take Kant's point to be that the subjective condition of thought (P_1) is, as it were, "projected" as an objective condi-

23 Nieman, *The Unity of Reason,* pp. 89–90. 24 Ibid.

tion; it is objective because it is presented as holding of "objects themselves," despite the fact that it already transcends the conditions of the understanding under which we can experience objects. As such, however, it holds unconditionally of appearances as if they were things in themselves. This "projected version" of P_1 is, of course, just what Kant means by the transcendental principle P_2, a principle that Kant explicitly defines in terms of the "objective necessity in the determination of *things in themselves,*" and which he told us in the chapter on the antinomies would be "valid for" appearances *if they were* things in themselves (cf. A499/B527). Moreover, although he does distinguish between the logical P_1 and the transcendental P_2, such a distinction clearly issues from the procedure of transcendental reflection, whereby the same demand for systematic unity is, as I have suggested, merely considered in two different ways.

In connection with this, it is clear that this subjective condition of thought is, as it were, "always already" presented to us in its objective form. This of course is consistent with Kant's opening identification of the principles and ideas of reason as themselves inherently illusory (A296/B353). It is further consistent with Kant's claim in the Discipline, where he tells us that the "transcendental enterprises of pure reason are one and all carried on within the domain proper to dialectical illusion, that is, within the domain of the subjective, which in its premises presents itself to reason, nay, forces itself upon reason, as being objective" (A792/B820). What is peculiar or distinctive about *reason* and *transcendental illusion,* then, is that the subjective principles of reason are themselves given, or presented as, taken for, objective ones, without the contribution of any other outside force.[25] Or, as Kant puts it, "we have to do with a natural and inevitable illusion, which rests on subjective principles, and foists them upon us as objective" (A298/B355).[26] As Kant himself says, "speculative reason in its transcendental employment is in itself dialectical" (A778/B806). Reason then, because its

25 We have already seen how transcendental illusion involves the "conflation" of P_1 and P_2. Kant further characterizes this conflation as the tendency to take a "subjective necessity of a connection of concepts" to be an "objective necessity in the determination of *things in themselves*" (A297/B354). We have already seen in Chapter 4 that Kant generally characterizes *all* error in terms of the conflation of subjective and objective conditions. Hence, the judgmental error (or the *logical* illusion) manifested in the transcendental employment of the understanding involved confusing the subjective conditions of sensibility and the objective conditions of the understanding. The error thus involved a conflation of *two distinct* faculties of knowledge.

26 Kant explicitly distinguishes this from logical illusion. See Chapter 4.

concern is precisely to conceive of things in relation to an ideal ground or substrate, that is, an idea (and so to consider things as if they were things in themselves), is inherently illusory.[27] Indeed, central to Kant's "transcendental turn" is the inversion of the traditional view that sees "appearances" (objects as given to the senses) as illusory representations of the underlying reality. On Kant's view, the consideration of things as they are in themselves is basically an illusory way of representing appearances. As Kant elsewhere states the problem, "In all judgments illusion rests on the confusion of the subjective with the objective. Especially in the case of principles of reason, where a priori subjective grounds can also be [mistaken for] objective grounds" (*R* 5058; 18:75).

It is just this feature which Kant tries to capture by the term "illusion" (*Illusion, Schein)*, and by the repeated appeal to optical analogy. Such analogy is particularly apparent in Kant's discussion of the ideas that are posited in conjunction with P_2; an idea of reason is referred to as a mere *focus imaginarious,* an imaginary focal point (A645/B673). For the present, it may be noted that, because Kant wants to argue that we are necessarily committed to the assumption of P_2, he is at the same time (and because of this) committed to the claim that the transcendental *illusion* is necessary as well.

As we saw in Chapter 4, Kant's claim that the illusion is necessary is usually downplayed in the secondary literature, even among those who wish to defend the strong claim that Kant is assigning a necessary (transcendental) status to the demand for systematic unity. This is not surprising, because the very label "illusion" seems nothing short of a denigration of reason and its pretensions to transcendent insight.[28] Yet, perhaps we are too hasty to draw this conclusion. Reason's capacity to take subjective goals that are not, and could not be, suggested by experience and to present them as objects about which we should seek knowledge is what Kant takes to be essential to its legislating and unifying function. "This illusion [*Illusion*] (which need not, however, be allowed to deceive [*betrügt*] us) is indispensably necessary if we are to direct the understanding beyond every given experience" (A645/B673).

27 This is argued in Chapter 4. Note as well, that this is clearly tied in for Kant with the lack of an intellectual intuition. Just as reason in the *Dissertation* represents things as they are, so too, in the *Third Critique* the understanding is distinguished from reason on the grounds that the latter, somehow akin to intellectual intuition, posits the actuality of the thing through representing it. See *Critique of Judgment,* section 76.

28 Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 194–196.

That Kant takes the legislating and projecting activity of reason to be intimately linked up with its illusory nature is evidenced by his simultaneous endorsement of the ideas and his characterization of them as imaginary focal points. The question is whether, and in what sense, it is coherent to suggest that the understanding could not fully operate without such an illusion. What benefit flows from directing the employment of the understanding (P_1) in accordance with transcendental presupposition, P_2?

The Unity of Reason

In order to understand fully why Kant takes the stronger principle P_2 to be necessary, we need to see why it is that he thinks that, in addition to the unity of experience provided by the understanding, reason must impose a unity of its own onto our knowledge. Here, it is important to keep in mind the tight connection between the *idea* or *principle* of systematic unity and the unity of reason itself. Indeed, I maintain that what Kant means by a "unity of reason" is precisely a conceptual unity, or idea. Kant refers to "the systematic unity of the manifold knowledge of the understanding" as *itself* a "logical principle" of reason (cf. A648/B676). Similar identifications appear throughout the Appendix (cf. A695/B723). Thus, the demand for, or principle of, systematic unity is itself taken, by Kant, to be expressive of the particular unity imposed by reason on our knowledge. Indeed, it seems to me that what Kant means by *the* unity of reason is, generally speaking, nothing other than the operation of the understanding in light of the rational principle P_2 and its idea of a whole of knowledge or nature. Correspondingly, on my interpretation, the ideas of reason are themselves particular "unities" of reason and instantiations of "the" unity of reason (P_2). Moreover, any purely rational idea is, as I read Kant's arguments, "a" unity of reason.

To say that the understanding operates in accordance with P_2 is, of course, to assert P_1. In this sense P_2 "confers" unity on the knowledge given through the understanding. In connection with this, Kant frequently suggests that the unity of reason, as either itself a mere idea, or else presupposing an idea, serves in turn to systematize the body of knowledge given through the understanding into one complete whole:

> If we consider in its whole range the knowledge obtained for us by the understanding, we find that what is peculiarly distinctive of reason in its attitude to this body of knowledge, is that it prescribes and seeks to achieve its systematization, that is, to exhibit the connection of its parts

> in conformity with a single principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of knowledge. . . . This idea . . . postulates a complete unity in the knowledge obtained by the understanding. (A646/B674)

In a similar fashion, reason is said to "unify the manifold of concepts by means of ideas, positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the activities of the understanding, which are otherwise concerned solely with distributive unity" (A644/B672). This once again suggests that the regulative force of P_1 derives from the postulation of P_2 and its idea of the "form of a whole of knowledge." Kant's view is that reason postulates a completed systematic unity of nature, expressed in P_2. This rational assumption carries with it or is manifested in a prescription to seek the corresponding unity of knowledge (P_1). But to what extent is the postulation of P_2, and so the "unity of reason" really necessary for the operation of the understanding?

Here it may be noted that Kant's discussion of the necessity of the transcendental principle always takes place in the context of the attempt to apply P_1 objectively. Relevant here is the fact that, even though Kant will ultimately argue that the principle ostensibly holds only for the concepts of, or, even further, the knowledge given through, the understanding, such "knowledge" refers not only to the concepts of the understanding but precisely these concepts in their function as determining objects (A666/B694). The problem, of course, is how to make sense of the claim that a purely subjective demand of reason has any legitimate a priori application to the knowledge given through the real use of the understanding. More generally, there seems to be a problem with how a purely subjective principle that is not constitutive of objects has any objective validity at all. This difficulty will become the focus of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. For now, it is important to note that insofar as the principle of reason, unlike a category of the understanding, is not constitutive of objects of experience, Kant cannot legitimize the use of such a principle by a deduction of the kind offered in the earlier case. (That is, he cannot justify the use of the principle by showing that it is a necessary condition under which something can be an object for us.) It seems clear that this problem at least partly accounts for the ambiguous and illusory status assigned to the demand for systematic unity.

What is striking in Kant's position is that at the same time that he wants to maintain a strict kind-distinction between the unities of reason and understanding, he also seems to want to say that the unity of rea-

son itself makes possible the coherent employment of the understanding. Thus, on the one hand, Kant argues for the independence of the understanding from reason:

> The unity of reason is . . . not the unity of a possible experience, but is essentially different from such unity, which is that of understanding. That everything which happens has a cause, is not a principle known and prescribed by reason. That principle makes the unity of experience possible, and borrows nothing from reason. (A307/B364; cf. A302/B359)

Although this argument suggests that the operations of the understanding, and hence possible experience, proceed independently of any contribution from reason, he elsewhere suggests that the unity of reason is itself (to some degree) necessary for the operation of the understanding. Indeed, he argues that without reason there could be "no coherent employment of the understanding" whatsoever (A651/B679–A652/B680). In Brandt's words, Kant seems to think that without the ideas of reason, the concepts of the understanding are "incoherent and useless."[29]

A basic problem with Kant's position, then, centers on the issue of whether the general demand for systematic unity of knowledge (as well as the correlated assumption that nature conforms to this demand) is really *necessary* for the proper employment of the understanding (and so necessary for the possibility of experience), or whether it simply "adds" something to this experience (namely its ability to be systematically unified in scientific theory). Some (e.g., Guyer) argue that, at least in the first *Critique,* the demand for systematic unity remains an independent interest of reason, which, although in "some sense transcendental," is not really necessary for the possibility of experience in general.[30] This view is countered in the writings of a variety of people (Brandt, Walker, Wartenberg, Buchdahl) who view systematic unity as essential to the workings of the understanding and/or to experience. Moreover, we have already seen how both positions might be justified by the text. In fact, this controversy would seem to be directly related to Kant's tendency to move back and forth between two conceptions of the status of the demand for systematic unity, with the first view opting for the "logical principle" (P_1) account, and the second view opting for the "transcendental principle" (P_2) account. I have suggested, however,

29 Brandt, "The Deductions in the *Critique of Judgment*," p. 179.
30 Guyer, "Reason and Reflective Judgment," p. 28.

that these two positions need not be exclusive of one another. Put simply, although reason has an interest in securing systematic unity of already obtained theoretical knowledge, such knowledge is only obtained in the first place in accordance with reason's ideal of such completed systematic unity. In this sense, there is a relation of mutual dependence between the goals or interests of reason and the theoretical activities of the understanding. If this is correct, then Kant's general view is that the assumption that nature is systematically unified is always and already implicit in the theoretical undertakings of the understanding. Hence, what will count as knowledge will ultimately be determined (at least in part) by whether it accords with this transcendental assumption of pure reason.

This general claim may be further specified by examining what Kant means by "systematic unity." To order knowledge systematically, for Kant, means subsuming or unifying it under fewer and fewer principles in light of the idea of the one "whole of knowledge" so that its parts are exhibited in their necessary connections. This, however, might seem to point to a weakness in Kant's position. Stated thus, the demand for a whole of knowledge sounds like some idiosyncratic feature of Kant's architectonic, rather than any necessary element for the operation of the understanding. Indeed, one might argue that knowledge acquisition need not be grounded in any assumption that nature itself is systematically unified, and it could equally be maintained that knowledge need not be directed toward this goal for systematic unity. Kant's position, however, seems to be that the assumption of a whole of knowledge is itself implicit in two other closely related efforts, that of seeking a completeness of knowledge and limiting the use of the understanding.

In contrast to the understanding, the function of which is to unify the matter of sensibility by subsuming it under concepts, the function of reason is to unify the knowledge given through the understanding (and sensibility) by subsuming it under ideas or principles. In this regard, in the first *Critique* the function of reason is precisely to conceive of objects independently of the conditions of experience in order to postulate the ideas (the universal) by means of which the appearances are "conceived" and interrogated. Kant sometimes articulates this difference in function by claiming that whereas the concepts of the understanding (*Verstandesbegriffe*) allow us to understand (*Verstehen*), concepts of reason (*Vernenftbegriffe*) allow us to conceive (*Begreifen*) (A311/B367). Indeed, the *very function* of reason is to think what is *beyond* experience not only in order to arrange the contents of knowledge into a hierarchical struc-

ture (and so in this sense to systematize), but in order, wherever possible, to *set limits* to the understanding and to bring the systematic unity prescribed by P_1 to "*completion.*"[31] The following *Reflexion* is representative of Kant's general position on the function of reason:

> In addition to sensibility and understanding (both a priori) the faculty of reason also contains principles for the employment of both . . . , and limits the concepts of understanding and those of sensibility to experience, so that their conditions will not be extended to things in themselves, God and Spirit. At the same time therefore to give to reason freedom to think of something beyond experience, which is surely *necessary for the completion of our use of understanding,* but which can never be thought by means of theoretical concepts except negatively . . . (*R* 5649; 18:297; my emphasis)[32]

The correlative demands for "completeness" and "limits" may be illuminated by appealing to the Discipline. In a footnote, Kant defines "completeness" as "clearness and sufficiency of characteristics." He means by "limits" "the precision shown in there not being more of these characteristics than belongs to the complete concept" (A728/B756n). Given this, reason's demand for completeness or complete unity of knowledge sounds rather like a demand for a clear exposition of all the "characteristics" true of the objects or states of affairs thought through our concepts or propositions, and sounds rather like a prescription to seek the thorough determination of our concepts. The project of bringing the employment of our understanding to completion, then, also carries with it a warning not to deny characteristics to a thing simply because we do not currently know them. But note that definitions, complete determinate concepts, are not, on Kant's view, ever within our

31 Compare the characterization in the *Groundwork,* where Kant argues that reason shows, by means of the Ideas, a "pure spontaneity." According to Kant, reason "manifests its highest function in distinguishing the sensible and intellectual worlds from one another and so in marking out limits for the understanding itself" (*Grunglegung* 4:453; 120; the English pagination refers to Paton's translation). I am arguing that this function is manifested in the speculative field as well, where it shows up in the Appendix and the account of the unity of reason.

32 I take it that by "theoretical concepts" Kant means concepts of the understanding. Note that this conception of reason seemed to occupy Kant long before the publication of the *Critique.* In one set of notes the purpose of metaphysics is defined not only by the question of synthetic a priori knowledge, but indeed in terms of the need to show how reason is both subject to restricting conditions in its empirical (physical) employment and yet itself necessarily free from such conditions (cf. *R* 4849; 18:5–6).

reach in any field but mathematics. This demand can only be a prescription to seek a completeness necessarily postulated by reason. As such, the idea of a "whole" of knowledge (a whole in which the sphere of the understanding's employment is conceived as completed) is implicit in any act of seeking knowledge, for Kant. This accords with Kant's suggestion that the exposition of concepts may be better described as a "declaration of our project" rather than as a definition of any object (A728/B756).

The demand for completion in our exposition of concepts is essentially linked in the critical philosophy to the correlative demand for limits to the understanding. The latter is clearly traceable back to the need to avoid errors of subreption, whereby conditions necessary for thinking or intuiting objects are surreptitiously transposed and applied to the objects thought through these procedures in an illicit fashion. Here Kant is concerned, as he has been throughout the Dialectic, to prevent us from attempting to acquire knowledge of ideas by erroneously extending the concepts of the understanding and/or spatiotemporal predicates to things conceived through pure reason. As such, the demand for setting limits to the use of the understanding is entailed by the procedure or task of bringing such knowledge to completion, and reflects the "critical" reinterpretation of the traditional rationalist ideal of complete knowledge. If this is so, then Kant's "projected ideal" of complete systematic unity is not to be construed merely as an enthusiastic hope, but essentially reiterates his conception of knowledge acquisition as a "project" undertaken in light of decidedly rational interests and goals that are logically prior to our actual theoretical investigations.

P_2 expresses reason's twofold interest in bringing to completion the conditioned knowledge of the understanding and thinking beyond such knowledge. Moreover, in assuming that the "unconditioned" is given, P_2 positively grounds the legitimacy of seeking systematic unity and completeness of knowledge; and without such completeness, a "whole of knowledge" is nonsensical. Here, two points should be made: (1) in asserting the *synthetic* connection between what is given as conditioned (generally the knowledge of appearances or experience), and the unconditioned, P_2 provides the link between what is experienced (i.e., known) under the conditions of the understanding and sensibility, and what is conceived by reason to be independent of these conditions. (2) As such, P_2 just is the principle of the form of a whole of knowledge.

Even supposing that the formal demand for systematic unity (as well

as the "illusory" objectification of this demand) is granted, it is clear that by itself this amounts to only a very general assertion. Despite its generality, however, it might be suggested that Kant means *more* by this than the familiar claim that the systematic unity of nature, the "order of nature," as it has come to be called, is merely a "projected" order, or that scientific inquiry is guided by a perhaps historically developed world view, or ideal science.[33] He means more, perhaps, even than that the ultimate justification for viewing knowledge in terms of a systematic whole is simply immanent to reason, or subjective.

Although all of this is certainly part of Kant's view, it might be noted that the objectified version of the principle of systematic unity (P_2) plays a role in Kant's first *Critique* somewhat akin to that which the moral law plays in the practical philosophy. In this regard, we may first return to Kant's characterization of the *logical* demand for systematic unity (i.e., P_1) as a "maxim" of reason. Like maxims in the practical philosophy, the demand for systematic unity is a very general self-imposed rule, which, as such, reflects the particular interest of reason. Thus, at least part of what Kant means by its misconstrual involves the a priori postulation of systematic unity without *reference to* the "special interest of reason" (A648/B676–A649/B677). Moreover, as with maxims elsewhere considered, it makes no sense to adopt the maxim unless we also presuppose that it can be acted on in a way that will bring about the ends demanded. Such a presupposition, it could be argued, is absolutely implicit in any rational adoption of the maxim.

Hence, P_2, the corresponding (presupposed) principle of the systematic unity of nature, although expressive of the very nature of our reason, is at the same time "legislative for us" (A695/B723); Kant's point seems to be that although the principle issues, as it were, "spontaneously" from the nature of our reason, and is indicative of reason's freedom from the conditions to which the employment of the understanding and sensibility are bound, it is nevertheless a "law" to which reason, if it is to act in a way consistent with its nature (i.e., in accordance with P_1), must submit itself (cf. A651/B679). In this, I take Kant to be defending a view of speculative reason that is in many ways analogous to his view on practical reason.

It is well known that in his practical philosophy Kant distanced himself from his predecessors by grounding morality in the autonomy of the rational will and by arguing that the moral law, as implied by that

33 See Kitcher, "Projecting the Order of Nature," pp. 221–222.

autonomy, must be self-imposed.[34] Despite this, the moral law legislates in accordance with certain rational (objectively valid) criteria; it is by no means a standard for the merely subjective evaluation of human action. Similarly, although the postulation of a systematic unity of nature is "subjectively imposed" and subjectively necessary, it is a necessity that is objective (unavoidable) *for us,* as rational, discursive knowers.

There is, of course, an important *dis*analogy here. Unlike the practical sphere, the activity of reason attains in its *speculative use* no objective reality, and it fails to do so precisely because its speculative (i.e., nonpractical) "interests," and the ends it thus seeks to realize (the knowledge of the unconditioned condition of knowledge itself and nature) by definition cannot be attained by theoretical knowledge (i.e., the understanding). More specifically, the very same activity of reason that seeks these ends prevents their attainment by *limiting* the sphere of the understanding's employment. There is, as Kant himself puts it, a conflict of reason with itself. As I understand it, this most ultimately accounts for both the "ambiguous status" of the demand for systematic unity and Kant's characterization of it in terms of illusion. Central to the idea of a whole of knowledge is its illusory status. Although the principle, properly speaking, expresses a "merely subjective" condition of *thought,* it nevertheless presents itself to us as providing an objective ground for the unification of phenomena as well:

> I entitle all subjective principles which are derived not from the constitution of an object but from the interest of reason in respect of a certain possible perfection of knowledge of the object, *maxims* of reason. There are . . . maxims of speculative reason, which rest entirely on its speculative interest, although they . . . seem to be objective principles. (A666/B694–A667/B695).

As we have seen, Kant's view of the indispensably necessary character of transcendental illusion is best articulated by his appeal to optical

34 For an interesting discussion of the way in which Kant "broke" with the tradition that preceded him, see Frederick Olafson's *Principles and Persons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), esp. pp. 35–44. My discussion in this paragraph was influenced by Olafson's account of the implications of Kant's rejection of the "intellectualist model" and by my suspicion that an analogous case could be made for Kant's "theory of science." Although he does not, to my knowledge, develop it in the way that I am attempting, Henry E. Allison has similarly referred to the principle of the systematic unity of knowledge as the "intellectual categorical imperative." See his *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 52–54.

illusion and mirror vision. The relevant feature here concerns the fact that the mirror projects an image of an object that makes the object appear to have its source where it really does not.[35] There are two important ways of interpreting this metaphor. First, note that Kant claims that the illusion is indispensable because it enables us to view "objects" that otherwise would fall beyond our visual field ("behind us"). This is possible in the optical case because the object that is reflected in the mirror appears to be in front of us, and within the purview of our visual field. As such, the "mirror vision" or the "illusion" is instrumental in presenting objects that otherwise would not be available to us. In the same way, the projecting activity of reason is said to allow us to conceive of "objects" which would provide the ultimate explanatory grounds for our claims, but which we are not in a position to encounter when we are constrained by the conditions of the understanding and sensibility. But second, note that concealed in this metaphor is another claim about the viewpoint of the perceiver or knower who "sees" the image. Indeed, the illusion is only successful to one who has the relevant perspective in relation to the "mirror," and it is only useful for one who is limited in her perspective in the first place. I take the "objects behind our backs" to correspond to objects qua considered by pure reason (ideas). And I take the need to consider objects from this perspective to issue from our own epistemological situation as finite discursive knowers. In relation to this last point, it should be noted that mirror vision also objectifies subjective features as well; in the perceptual case, the subject itself is projected forward or outward.

I take it that Kant's analogy is intended to convey the idea that our subjective rational maxims are only made accessible to us as objective principles by means of the illusion (they can become principles for us because of this). Only thus (by means of the illusion that "frees us" from the conditioned standpoint) can we extend the field of knowledge to include claims about objects which go beyond given particular experiences. And only in such a field, as we shall see in the next section, could laws (universal statements that support counterfactual and subjunctive conditionals) serve any deductive purpose. If this is Kant's view, then it appears that the unity of reason plays an essential role not only in securing the overall unity of knowledge so that a unified science is possible; it seems that he thinks that reason is immanent in the very articu-

35 See P. Kerszberg, "Two Senses of Kant's Copernican Revolution," *Kant-Studien* 80 (1989): 63–80.

lation of laws in the first place. I now hope to show how this very general account of the unity of reason and the demand for systematicity sheds light on the way in which Kant claims that ideas of reason and systematicity function in empirical scientific inquiries.

Kant's Philosophy of Science

A basic interpretive issue relating to Kant's Appendix has to do with the precise role the demand for systematic unity plays in empirical knowledge. Even granting that Kant does assign a necessary (transcendental) status to the "unity of reason," the question is whether the assumption of P_2 has anything other than the most general role as a supposition implicit in seeking knowledge. Part of the confusion can be clarified by distinguishing between two rather different levels at which Kant defends the legitimacy of the demand for systematicity (completeness and limitation). First, there is a very general claim. As we saw in the preceding section, Kant clearly takes the idea of systematic unity in general to be a goal delivered by reason. In regard to this, Kant often offers what appears to be a merely descriptive claim: reason *just is* systematic; the very nature of reason is to demand, say, the "unconditioned." Such claims relate directly to Kant's reinterpretation of the nature and role of reason, and accords with the general view that reason is prescriptive, and legislative. Moreover, it links up with Kant's view that reason grounds our capacity to "go beyond" particular experiences and to interrogate and demand answers from nature itself. This point should not be minimized. I have suggested that Kant's theory of reason goes hand in hand with a kind of antirealism – that what counts as knowledge ultimately stems from whether it conforms to the "interests" of reason.

But Kant does not stop here. He clearly wants to demonstrate that this general feature of reason also grounds the employment of the understanding itself. Indeed, Kant suggests that this demand functions in empirical knowledge. With respect to the latter, Kant suggests that although the principles, or rules, of the understanding hold for objects of experience (appearances) in general (or "Nature"), such principles must be linked up with the more specific "matter" or content of empirical cognition (e.g., the manifold of empirical cognition).[36] It is well

36 Kant explicitly distinguishes between experience as cognition and the manifold of empirical representations in the preface to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science,* 4:472.

known that this need is what generally motivates Kant's argument (in the introductions to the third *Critique*) for the transcendental presupposition of the purposiveness of nature. There Kant argues that although experience forms a system under transcendental laws, the coherent systematic unity of particular experience under empirical laws is also needed in order for judgment to be able to subsume particulars under universals and so secure the unity of experience (*First Introd.* 20:202–203; 9–10).[37] This same view is clearly present in the Appendix as well (cf. A654/B682).

This problem is clearly the analogue at the level of reason to that with which we were confronted in the Transcendental Deduction. The need for a deduction of the categories was generated precisely by the possibility that appearances could be so constituted so as not to conform to the formal conditions of thought (the concepts of the understanding). So too, Kant seems to want to say, the empirically given as such in experience could be such as not to conform a priori to the formal conditions of *reason;* more specifically, the empirically given could be such as not to conform to the rational demand for systematic unity expressed in the principles and ideas. This fact is perhaps connected with Kant's views about why, in addition to the general categorial determination of objects through the understanding, we require the unifying function of reason. For the present, we may note that just as, in the Transcendental Deduction, he needed a synthetic step to connect the categories to empirical intuitions in general (or spatiotemporal intuitions), so too, Kant now needs something analogous to a synthetic connection between reason and the matter of *empirical cognition*. In the *Critique,* Kant attempts to forge such a connection, itself expressed by the synthetic principle P_2, by the ideas as analoga of schemata, although later on (in the *Critique of Judgment*) he does so by judgment.

Despite the similarities between these two texts, it is important to see that the arguments in the *Critique* are far more general than those in the Introductions to the *Critique of Judgment*. In the former text, Kant is arguing for the necessary postulation of certain "universals" (ideas) in relation to which knowledge or experience in general is to be systematically unified, and by means of which (in turn) appearances themselves may be conceived to be systematically unified. In the Introduction to the third *Critique,* Kant appears to be much more specifically interested in showing that in order for judgment to subsume the par-

37 See *Critique of Judgment* (5:180).

ticulars under any such (rationally postulated) universals, we must assume that experience itself conforms to systematic unity according to *empirical laws.* To be sure, Kant does not yet clearly distinguish between these two projects in the Appendix and, as I have said, he sometimes clearly suggests that he is there concerned with something like this second problem. This becomes particularly evident in the first part of the Appendix, where Kant focuses on showing how reason is immanent in empirical inquiry. Be this as it may, I take it that the more specific problem of the third *Critique* is nested in the larger problem. Indeed, that particular experience might not cohere in a whole of knowledge (by itself being ordered by laws that can be linked up to a *system*) is a problem o*nly if* we have already postulated as necessary the unconditioned systematic unity of knowledge and nature. In the *First Introduction* to the third *Critique,* for example, Kant argues that "experience must be possible as a system under *empirical laws if* one thinks it *as a system*" (*First Introd.* 20:210; 15).[38] However, the necessity of thinking experience as an *empirical system* would seem itself to be, for Kant at least, parasitic upon the already established rational necessity of postulating the unconditioned systematic unity of knowledge and nature that is defended in the Appendix to the first *Critique.*[39] I have suggested that the general demand for systematic unity translates into a requirement for completeness and limitation that Kant takes to underlie any attempt to determine (even empirical) knowledge.

This position generates a number of specific problems that have not yet been addressed. In connection with the distinct attempt to link this demand up to the unity of *empirical knowledge,* for example, problems arise when we attempt to specify the relation between the rational demand for systematic unity of knowledge and the principles of experience articulated in the Analytic, especially the second analogy. As it frequently occurs in the secondary literature, the problem can be framed in terms of the following two very broadly opposed positions.[40] On the

38 See the *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment,* trans. James Haden (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 20:210; 15. The English pagination refers to the Haden translation.

39 Moreover, because Kant is most interested in establishing the necessity of postulating this systematic unity of knowedge or experience as a whole, there is a real danger involved in reading the first *Critique* backward from the third *Critique.* One problem is that such a reading invites a strong identification of reason and the later reflective judgment.

40 I do not mean to suggest that these two general positions exhaust the views. In particular, Gordon Brittan offers a view that is supposed to be a "middle path"; see "Systematicity and Objectivity in the Third Critique," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1990): 167–186.

one hand, the arguments of the Analytic (e.g., the second analogy) might be viewed as sufficient to ground the scientific articulation of empirical laws, so that the "demand for systematic unity" is an independent and, as it were, higher-order requirement, which attaches not to the actual discovery (guarantee) of lawlikeness, but simply to the systematic (hierarchical) connection of already known empirical laws (and so previously attained scientific knowledge) into a general scientific world view. On this view, the demand for systematic unity plays a rather specific and somewhat isolated role. Although commentators vary widely in how they specify this role, the general idea is that it remains independent of the actual scientific discovery and elaboration of empirical laws or phenomena. Given Kant's apparent identification of "experience" with "knowledge according to laws" in the Analytic, the use of reason is necessary neither for possible experience nor for scientific knowledge of particular laws. Moreover, given Kant's obvious commitment, in the Analytic, to Newtonian principles, this view sees a "tight" connection between Kant's claims about science and the particulars of Newtonian science. Friedman, for example, assigns to pure reason (and/or reflective judgment) the task of furnishing second-order methodological principles that guide the organization of independently acquired empirical scientific knowledge (empirical concepts or laws that are Newtonian in both form and content) into a classificatory system.[41]

On the other hand, the systematic unity demanded by or imposed by reason might be construed as actually conferring nomological status onto, say, empirical regularities. On this view, the task of reason, and indeed the demand for systematic unity, plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the existence of, conferring the nomological status to, and/or providing the methodological principles that allow for the discovery of empirical laws as such in the first place. On this view, which is roughly found in Buchdahl, McFarland, Brandt, and Kitcher, reason's unifying or systematizing function actually grounds or makes possible empirical knowledge according to laws (and so, to this extent, experience as well).

There can be little doubt, given what we have seen, that this last account is more generally representative of Kant's position. Indeed, as Buchdahl has argued, the fact that Kant isolates the activity of the understanding and discusses it separately in the Analytic is not to be seen

41 See Michael Friedman, "Causal Laws and Foundations of Natural Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 161–199.

as an endorsement of the claim that it actually or ultimately functions independently of the unifying regulative activity of reason.[42] Most especially, the suggestion that reason's interests are unique and independent should not be misconstrued as the claim that they constitute a "second-order" requirement that is merely *conditional* upon the desire to develop the unification of scientific knowledge into grand theories.[43]

Indeed, from a purely exegetical standpoint, this view seems entirely unfounded, for as we have seen one of the peculiarities of Kant's position is the *necessity* he attaches to the unifying function of reason:

> For the law of reason which requires us to seek for this unity, is a necessary law, since without it we should have no reason at all, and without reason no coherent employment of the understanding, and in the absence of this no sufficient criterion of empirical truth. In order, therefore, to secure an empirical criterion we have no option save to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679)

As the quotation indicates, Kant takes systematic unity and completeness of knowledge to be in some way necessary for the coherent employment of the understanding itself. But this general claim still needs to be filled out more precisely; for even if we grant the view that systematicity is needed to "ground" empirical laws, the question still remains how it accomplishes this grounding.

There has been a considerable amount of attention to this issue, and therefore also a number of interpretations of just exactly how systematicity might function in the elaboration of empirical laws, and why both science and experience might be said to require the assumption of systematicity. One prevailing view holds that in addition to the general (transcendental) principles of the understanding, we require the additional (rational) postulation of order and regularity in nature.[44] Using the problem of the causal principle as an example, the position roughly goes as follows. Although the second analogy demonstrates,

42 Buchdahl, *Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science.* His argument for this claim is offered throughout chapter 7 of the book, esp. pp. 497–532.

43 This view can be found in Pippin as well; see *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 210. I find Pippin's adherence perplexing, given his acknowledgment of the connection between the unity of reason, the necessity of its role in connection with the understanding, and the thought of the thing in itself.

44 This view, in its essentials, is provided by MacFarland in *Kant's Conception of Teleology,* chap. 1. It seems to be accepted by Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 209.

say, that "every event has some cause," experience provides us with particular types of events that, in order to instantiate the general causal principle, must be subsumed under event types that are connected (by particular empirical laws) with particular types of "causes." In order for a particular nomological connection to be established, however, particulars in experience must themselves be conceived under or investigated in accordance with the (regulative) principle that nature exhibits regularity. I take it that systematicity, seen here as providing an assumption about such regularities, is basically taken to be a condition for inductive procedures, or at least a principle that complements such procedures.[45]

Although the view that we must assume regularity in nature seems to be one that Kant certainly did accept, I nevertheless submit that this view does not explain the function of the presupposition of the *systematic unity of nature*. Certainly, *regularity* of nature does not offer any good criterion for lawlikeness; at least there is no necessary connection between the two. For one thing, a regularity itself, as Hume has shown us, cannot be the ground for any genuine causal or necessary claim.[46] For another, a universal statement may qualify as a law given some theory even if it has, say, a single instance. Indeed, it may do so even if it has no instances.[47] I am thinking here of cases where consequences are deduced from existing theories (e.g., a Newtonian theory of gravitation), and are taken to have nomological status even though they have no known instantiations whatsoever. I am obviously disagreeing with the suggestion that the discovery of "genuine laws" requires actual regularity and repeatability, and I take it that part of what distinguishes laws from empirical (inductive) generalizations is the fact that they are able to support counterfactual and subjunctive conditionals and so are not tied to or dependent on empirical instantiation for their nomological status. For example, we might say that on the basis of known theories, together with certain physical facts (e.g., temperature at which a certain chemical compound undergoes change), that any material made of a particular combination of elements will react to another at a cer-

45 This view is urged by Walker in the first pages of his cooperative effort with Guyer, "Kant's Conception of Empirical Law." As Walker himself acknowledges, however, Kant was not really explicitly concerned with the problem of induction (contra causality).

46 Brittan notes this point as well; see "Systematicity and Objectivity in the Third Critique," p. 176.

47 Contra H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 2:275–278. Allison agrees with this view in an (unpublished) critique of Friedman.

tain temperature in a certain way. We might hold this to be true even if we know of no such material. Such a "law" could support the conditional that "if x, then y." Moreover, I take it that this ability to sustain counterfactuals and the like is what provides for the deductive and explanatory force of laws. I take it that this holds even of "empirical" laws. I am not arguing, however, that all laws have to be deductively *established,* or that there cannot be "laws" of probabilistic form. Simply that actual regularity is not necessary for nomological status.

It could perhaps be argued that, if not the nomological status of, at least *our discovery* of empirical laws requires or is aided by regularity in most cases (i.e., laws are not always deductively established from existing theory, but are discovered because recurring instances of them are routinely presented to us in experience). But even if we grant *this,* it is most difficult to use it as an account of Kant's views about the demand for *systematic unity.* More specifically, *if* order and regularity in nature are (in fact) required or useful for us in the discovery of empirical laws, the mere *presupposition* of same is not going to yield results. I suppose there is some sense in which it would make no sense to pursue such knowledge if we assumed that nature exhibits absolutely *no* such order or regularity; but why should we assume this? Experience itself presents us with uniformities. Without pursuing this issue further, it may simply be noted that the view that what Kant means by systematic unity is reducible to an assumption about the regularity or uniformity of nature is not recommended by the text of the Appendix. In fact, most of Kant's own examples concerning the work of reason there draw on or suggest a very different kind of concern. More specifically, Kant seems primarily interested in establishing the necessary role played in the unification of knowledge by the postulation of ideas, or the use of "speculative" concepts or hypothetical unities. As we shall see, these "unities of reason" are supposed to provide the intelligible "grounds" in relation to which various sets of phenomena (or bodies of knowledge) are themselves unified. As such, they provide the explanatory basis for the systematic unification of knowledge into "wholes." In the Appendix, both of these concerns appear to be linked with a claim about the necessity of the ideas of reason.

The Unifying Function of Ideas

Kant's arguments for the necessity of the three transcendental ideas have not met with much support. Prima facie, there seems to be little

ground for the claim that the idea of the soul, for example, is necessary either for empirical investigations into psychology per se, or even for the more general unification of our knowledge into a systematic whole. Yet, if we are to understand Kant's attempt to assign a positive function to the three transcendental ideas under consideration in the earlier portions of the Dialectic (i.e., to justify the use of these ideas in relation to the knowledge given through the real use of the understanding), then we must first get clear about the kind of necessity that attaches to our thinking these ideas in the first place. The first thing to note is that, contrary to the views of some of his commentators, Kant does not argue that either the transcendental illusion or the transcendental ideas are necessary *just because* we are constrained to use them regulatively.[48] On the contrary, as we have seen, the necessity of thinking (conceiving) of these ideas is established quite independently of Kant's subsequent efforts to justify their use in connection with the manifold of empirical knowledge. Indeed, the aim of the metaphysical deduction of the ideas was precisely to show that the ideas of reason are somehow necessitated by the inherent demand for the unconditioned condition (explanation) of thought. Given this, it is clear that Kant has deep theoretical reasons for assigning to the ideas a necessary status, reasons that have to do with his account of the very nature of human reason.

For our present purposes, the key point is that the ideas themselves are correlates of the activity of thinking the unconditioned in relation to the three modes of thought outlined in the Analytic. To understand this, we need to recall that, as I argue in Chapter 4, each "idea" itself may be construed or described either "formally or subjectively" or "transcendentally or objectively," depending on whether we consider it in connection with the manifold of the understanding or in abstraction from such a manifold. More specifically, I argue that the prescription to seek the unconditioned (P_1) generates certain ideas that (owing to P_2) are projected as objects. Taking the soul as an example, Kant's claim is that the necessary representation of the unconditioned unity of subjective conditions of representations in general (the transcendental I) is projected as an objective ground of all representations in general.

Similarly, each of the other "official" ideas (the world, God) expresses a unity of a certain set of representations. By P_2 each of these is projected or objectified as a transcendental object, or ground. As such,

48 Ralph Walker is guilty of this, see *Kant on Pure Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 140–141.

each idea is taken or viewed as the transcendental ground or substrate in relation to a specific totality. Such a transcendental object is broadly speaking, what Kant means by an idea – that is, it is the transcendental correlate of the activity of thinking the body of knowledge (or some subset of the body of knowledge) as a given whole. Such an object, however, is not actually given, it is merely projected or posited by reason.

I have argued that the Dialectic as a whole (and specifically the rejection of the metaphysical arguments) is to be broadly viewed as Kant's criticism of the attempt to determine these ideas through the categories of the understanding. Accordingly, we saw that Kant criticized the attempt to deduce metaphysical knowledge from the objectified and illusory ideas on the grounds that such an attempt involved a transcendental misemployment of the understanding. Yet the ideas themselves continue to be necessary for Kant; and, indeed, their illusory presentation as objects continues to be held to be indispensable. Although Kant is by no means explicit about it, this view is operative in the second part of the Appendix, where Kant assigns to the transcendental ideas (most explicitly the idea of God) the function of serving as the conception of a ground of all empirical reality (cf. A696/B724). Although this suggests that the necessity of the ideas of reason is grounded solely in the need to posit something "outside" experience as ground or correlate, Kant repeatedly argues that these ideas are to be viewed as manifestations of reason's demand for the systematic unity of thought. Indeed, he suggests that an idea of reason just is the demand for systematic unity when it is thought in some determinate way (A681/B709).

Even if this general account adequately states Kant's position vis-à-vis the ideas, it must be admitted that it hardly suffices to justify his claim that such ideas regulate *empirical inquiries* into, say, psychology or physics. Even if one accepts that "some" ideas have a role in such inquiries, such a claim seems particularly tenuous in regard to the ideas of the soul, or God. Nevertheless, because such ideas serve to unify knowledge in general into a whole, I take it that Kant wants to claim that for this very reason they are necessary presuppositions for empirical inquiries or empirical knowledge as well.

This is reflected in the first part of the Appendix, where Kant argues that the systematic unity of thought presupposes the idea of the form of the *whole* of knowledge (A646/B674). This idea is said to postulate knowledge as a system connected according to necessary laws. Unfortunately, however, Kant's subsequent argument (A646/B674–A669/B697) is significantly complicated by the fact that he seems to

have a number of different aims in mind that are not clearly distinguished from one another and have nothing clearly to do with the three transcendental ideas. Nevertheless, he is clearly concerned to show that the empirical employment of the understanding proceeds under the influence and guidance of the legislating activity of reason; consequently, Kant offers a series of cases that are supposed to exemplify reason's unifying activity in the domain of natural science (cf. A646/B674).

This concern is evidenced in Kant's decision to provide an example of unification by appealing to the ideas or concepts of "pure earth," "pure water," "pure air," and the like. Kant's aim is not to argue that *these concepts* serve the purpose of unifying the "whole of knowledge" into one system, but simply to demonstrate how the general unifying function of reason is implicit in the practices governing scientific classification.[49] Kant's point, I take it, is that the concepts of pure earth, pure water, pure air, as postulations or ideal "objects," enable us to explain the chemical interactions of bodies in accordance with the more general "idea" of a mechanism in the same way that, for example, the ideas of the soul, the world, and God will supposedly be shown to enable us to explain the connection between various modes of knowledge in accordance with the more general idea of knowledge as a systematic whole. Here, of course, the idea of a mechanism is used to unify a rather particular branch of knowledge (or, correlated with this, a very particular set of phenomena) into a "whole."

Kant's basic intent seems to be to show how reason is "already immanent" in knowledge. This same concern, of course, is apparent throughout the Appendix. It emerges again in his discussion of the idea of a fundamental force. As in the preceding example, Kant here articulates a scenario in which an idea (here the idea of a fundamental power) problematically represents or "projects," as it were, the intelligible ground of a set of diverse phenomena (psychological phenomena). The systematic connection of discrete phenomena is accomplished by conceiving them in relation to the idea in question. As in the earlier case, we are constrained to seek this systematic unity by a logical maxim, which in turn prescribes that we seek the "absolutely fundamental power" in the interests of establishing principles for the manifold rules that experience may supply us (A650/B678).

49 MacFarland discusses this throughout the first chapter of his *Kant's Conception of Teleology*.

Given this, the specific issue is how Kant wants to say that these or *any* such ideas have any kind of necessary connection to scientific, and especially empirical, knowledge. At issue here is the aforementioned fact that Kant seems to assign to reason the function of introducing into our knowledge not merely systematicity in the sense of hierarchical classification or unification, but also unconditioned *necessity* and *completeness*. Once again, the idea of the form of a whole of knowledge is said to postulate "complete unity in the knowledge obtained by the understanding, by which this knowledge is to be not a mere contingent aggregate, but a system connected according to necessary laws" (A646/B676). This view runs throughout the Appendix, as well as the Introduction to the third *Critique*.[50] As Kant elsewhere puts it: "Reason serves to give *necessity* to understanding and to give circumference and unity [*Umfang und Einheit zu geben*] to the sphere of its employment" (*R*5553; 18:225). I have already suggested that this task of reason involves postulating an ideal object as the ground of appearances. Although conceiving of appearances as related to a common intelligible ground entails abstracting from the conditions of experience, Kant's claim will be that doing this enables us to consider a disparate set of phenomena as ideally unified.

Such a view may now be more carefully specified by noting that it is only by considering what is at the ground of appearances that any unconditioned necessity or completeness could be introduced into our knowledge. Note, however, that by the strictures of Kant's own epistemology, one cannot apply such necessity or completeness to appearances (or even *to* things in themselves), but rather their introduction is undertaken in a rather peculiar way, to wit, by conceiving the knowledge of the understanding *in general* in relation to a speculative object, hypothetical unity, or idea.

Along somewhat similar lines, Gordon Brittan suggests that it is only in terms of theoretical concepts and the otherwise ideal objects thus provided, that *necessary* empirical laws can be introduced. Such necessary laws, in turn, are required of physical objects if we are to apply the concept of causality to them as they are given in experience. Although I disagree with many of the details of Brittan's position,[51] it seems clear that

50 See *Kritik der Urteilskraft* 5:180–186; 19–26. English pagination is to the Pluhar translation.

51 Brittan's position is ambiguous. On the one hand, the necessary "laws" are supposed to be about physical objects per se, although, on the other, these laws are deemed neces-

the introduction of theoretical entities (and precisely the ideal nature of the postulated objects) is held by Kant to be the way in which reason introduces unconditioned necessity and completeness into the system of knowledge, and that this is prerequisite for applying causality.

Suppose we are confronted in our experience with a certain set of correlations: persons exhibiting a set of similar symptoms, say S_1, S_2 . . . S_5. I assume that such correlations and their repetition over time are accessible to us in possible experience by the understanding. Now, even though we may be constrained to hold that "every event has some cause," we cannot even define the "event" for which we seek a cause unless we begin to unify the variety of symptoms into a whole, such that they can, say be postulated as a "syndrome." Although the postulation itself is only hypothetical (in fact, it may not correspond to subsequent empirical discoveries – S_3, for example, may be *totally* coincidental in its relation to the others – it does serve to identify and set a "problem" for the understanding. But note that, to the extent that experience provides us only with an aggregate of recurring symptoms, we cannot even "unify" the symptoms into a connected whole unless we conceive of some kind of connection between S_1 . . . S_5. It absolutely will not do to assert or postulate that S_1 is necessarily (say, causally) related to S_2, S_2 to S_3, and so on. The fact is, each of these instances, as it is given in experience (and from the standpoint of the understanding), is only contingently related to the others. The entire set could be collectively affected by some (presently unknown) external cause, or some one of the features (e.g., S_2) could cause the others, or set off a causal chain among them, or some combination (e.g., S_1, S_4) could cause the others, and so on. In other words, the "objective" connections among them (if such there be) must be empirically discovered and articulated. Yet, as we have seen, the

sary only because they are laws of the postulated ideal objects. If Brittan wants to argue that the latter entails the former, we would seem to run back up against the very problem with which we began – how necessity can attach to empirical cases. Moreover, in this case, Brittan has the real problem of applying causality to things in themselves. Further, it seems that on this reading causality cannot be applied to cases that are not instantiations of laws of strict universal form (i.e., laws of probabilistic form). Suppose we want to say that AIDS is "caused by" exposure to the HIV virus. But while there is presumably a causal connection, there seems to be no "necessary law" governing this connection. Many exposed to the virus do not go on to develop AIDS but simply remain asymptomatic carriers (are HIV positive). Some exposed do not even become HIV positive. It does not follow, however, that AIDS is not "caused by" exposure to the HIV virus. At least, as I understand it, the connection is still deemed by scientists to be a causal instantiation.

discovery itself is grounded reason's "setting the task" for the understanding. In other words, in order to apply causality or to establish the "necessary connections" between the features, we need to view these features themselves as interconnected (otherwise why go further?) but connected in a way that leaves room for actual empirical discovery and inquiry to determine the factual connections. Although we cannot attempt to establish necessary connections between actual empirical objects a priori, we certainly can and must consider these "appearances" as necessarily connected somehow. We do so by postulating a general (intelligible) systematic connection. One way of putting this is to say that reason defines and presents the problem to the understanding, and that it does so by "picking out" a set of phenomena that needs to be "connected." Moreover, the "material" chosen will reflect a particular interest of reason in "unifying" the broader field of knowledge and bringing it to completion. This example is very basic, but the same story, I take it, is told at virtually every level of inquiry. The various psychological phenomena presented in experience are taken up by reason, which postulates the idea of a fundamental force as the common substrate (ground) of the same. On the basis of this, understanding has a problem set, and empirical inquiries proceed under the direction of reason and its assumption that this variety of psychological activities operates in a way that can be systematically connected.

The basic point is that these unities of reason are only problematic, postulated, or "projected" unities. This is underscored by Kant's insistence that the unifying function of reason is *hypothetical* in character. Kant presumably means to argue that it is only by representing the aggregate collection of phenomena in some necessary connection to a shared underlying ground or substrate that such phenomena can be taken to exhibit the necessary connections requisite for the discovery and articulation of laws. The connections themselves may be discovered empirically, but are guided by the assumption that they all cohere in one whole.

Moreover, what is being postulated by reason in its use of ideas is not, for Kant, merely another property in the domain of appearances, which postulates an *empirical* connection of properties that are merely not superficially detectable in objects.[52] Rather, the postulation is of a non-

52 This view is stated by Patricia Kitcher in "Reasoning in a Subtle World," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30, suppl. (1991): 187–195. I have a number of problems accepting her view. First, she argues against Brittan that theoretical concepts must be empirical "because they apply to phenomena." Whatever the merits of this view independent of Kant

sensible ground in terms of which, on the one hand, the interconnection of properties, objects, states of affairs *themselves* are to be viewed as related by necessity and, on the other, the correlated branch of knowledge of the understanding itself attains unity and completeness. To be sure, Kant describes this procedure at a number of different levels of generality. Thus, in the case of the pure earth, pure air example, as well as the example of a fundamental (psychological) force, Kant is concerned with "unifying" rather particular sets of phenomena and knowledge. But Kant's stronger claim, and the claim that I take to be central to the Appendix as a whole, is clearly that these scientific or theoretical unifications undertaken by reason in its empirical or physical use themselves presuppose the more general assumption that the knowledge given through the understanding in general, and so nature itself, must "cohere systematically" into one whole by being conceived in necessary relation to some ultimate ground or substrate. Such is the function of reason in its pure or speculative activity, an activity that I have generally discussed in Part I, and which is articulated by the transcendental principle P_2. In fact, just this kind of argument sustains Kant's claim that, for example, the three transcendental ideas are necessary presuppositions for science. This in turn suggests that Kant's theory of ideas is crucial to his understanding of the role of reason in science. In such a case, the doctrine of transcendental illusion is also critical to Kant's overall conception of reason in scientific theorizing.

(I disagree with this as well), it absolutely will not do as a statement of Kant's own position. Kant repeatedly characterizes the unifying function of reason in terms of the postulation of ideas which, for Kant, are not empirical concepts. Second, Kant does not say – in fact, he opposes the suggestion that – these ideas "apply" to phenomena. He ceaselessly argues that reason has no direct application to appearances or in any other way to the contents of the understanding.

CONCLUSION

In this work, I have tried to suggest that the doctrine of transcendental illusion offered in the Introduction to the Dialectic plays a crucial role in Kant's arguments. Toward this, I have argued for two general theses: first, that Kant's account of transcendental illusion grounds his criticisms of the specific arguments of dogmatic metaphysics and, second, that this notion of illusion has a distinct importance with respect to Kant's views on the positive, regulative function of reason. Clearly, these two claims are related. More specifically, Kant's assertion that the arguments of dogmatic metaphysics are all based on an illusion only makes sense in the broader context of his unique account of the nature and function of human reason. The connection between these two issues is made particularly clear when we consider what I have referred to as Kant's "inevitability thesis."

I began this study by posing a problem that would seem to be generated for Kant by his inevitability thesis – that is, his claim that the fallacious inferences of metaphysics themselves (and because of a transcendental illusion) carry with them some kind of necessity, or inevitability. Once again, the problem centers on the fact that Kant wants to maintain both that there is something about the metaphysical doctrines that is inevitable or unavoidable and, yet, that his own transcendental critique enables us to avoid the "actual errors" involved in drawing the metaphysical conclusions. As we have seen, Kant is frequently accused of inconsistency precisely because the account of the inevitable illusion does not seem to be the same as, or consistent with, his subsequent account of the metaphysical fallacies. In particular, there seems to be no way that we can reconcile the inevitability thesis with the simple diagnoses of the logical error of ambiguous middle. In-

deed, this general difficulty has motivated many to dismiss Kant's stronger claims about the inevitability of the metaphysical errors.

Against this, our examination of the doctrine of transcendental illusion suggests that Kant himself wished to distinguish between the illusions and the fallacies of metaphysics. This distinction, I have argued, plays a crucial role in resolving many of the difficulties that have been attributed to Kant's account. First of all, it allows Kant to maintain that although the illusions that ground the metaphysical errors are, in each case, "unavoidable," and "necessary," the subsequent errors (fallacies) are not.

Equally important, however, is the fact that the distinction between the illusions and the fallacies of metaphysics allows Kant to offer criticisms of the fallacies that nevertheless leave room for the positive account of the principles and ideas (and the illusion) of reason. I have already argued throughout that one of the virtues of this interpretation is its ability to accommodate Kant's efforts to assign this positive (regulative) role to reason and its illusions. Here, then, it is worth emphasizing that the doctrine of transcendental illusion would seem to be inseparable from Kant's account of the nature and function of human reason. Indeed, as I have tried to demonstrate, Kant developed the account of metaphysical illusion progressively throughout his career in conjunction with his changing theory of the intellect, or reason. The mature doctrine of transcendental illusion, then, goes hand in hand with the critical conception of reason.

The position in the *Critique* seeks both to undermine the attempt to use pure, speculative reason as a source of a priori knowledge about objects, and yet also to establish its necessary subjective function in securing systematic unity and completion of knowledge. Embedded in this view is the suggestion that what ultimately "counts" as knowledge is what conforms to the interests and goals posited by reason. Each of these features of reason is successfully tied together in Kant's characterization of the (subjectively necessary) ideas of reason as "focal points" posited as regulative devices for guiding the project of knowledge acquisition. In relation to this, the *Critique* is in many ways and for obvious reason the synthesis of the precritical (i.e., defamatory) position on reason characteristic of, for example, the *Dreams,* and the encomium to the intellect that we found in the *Dissertation*. Thus, on the one hand, we find Kant using the optical analogy of the *focus imaginarious* in the *Dreams* in his attempt to characterize the illusory status of reason and its ideas, while on the other hand we find him calling on the blatantly Platonic

notion of the ideas as archetypes or prototypes in an attempt to characterize them as the grounds for unity of knowledge. In this way, the *Critique* clearly reflects Kant's desire to return to the attempt made in the *Dreams* to curb the theoretical pretensions of reason, while at the same time securing the "subjective" function of reason as the "highest" faculty of knowledge. The doctrine of illusion, I contend, is designed in order to allow Kant to do exactly this.

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INDEX

Al-Azm, Sadik, 172, 182, 198, 201–2, 218–19
Allison, Henry E., 9, 77, 84–9, 99, 106–7, 125, 134–5, 145, 147, 150, 160–1, 180–94, 202–15, 225, 286, 293
Ameriks, Karl, 8–9, 117, 122, 148–60, 204
antinomies, 172–229
  first antinomy, 183–94
  fourth antinomy, 218–29
  second antinomy, 194–209
  third antinomy, 214–18
apperception, 84, 146–52, 159–62, 167–8, 246
Aristotle, 33, 36

Baumgarten, A. G., 24, 231
Bennett, Jonathan, 4, 116–19, 127, 154–60, 174, 180, 201, 208, 219, 244
Beweisgrund, 23–4, 31, 41, 61, 72, 96, 248
Brandt, Reinhard, 6, 7, 274, 281, 291
Brook, Andrew, 148–9
Buchdahl, Gerd, 6, 119, 127, 266, 268, 281, 291, 292
Butts, Robert, 8, 104–5, 112, 124, 266

Clarke, Samuel, 172–3, 182, 201–7
Crusius, C. A., 3, 21, 27

Descartes, René, 17, 23, 82, 258–9
de Vleeschauwer, H. J., 17, 18, 21, 23, 31, 110, 131
Deutlichkeit, 25–32, 56, 61
Dreams of a Spirit Seer, 17, 32–73, 96, 103–5, 111, 129, 170–1, 183, 205, 304–5

Epicurus, 36, 183, 217

fallacy (*see also* subreption, fallacy of), 1, 57, 143, 149, 152, 175, 270
  of ambiguous middle, 154–71, 260
  in Ideal, 229–56
focus imaginarious
  in Critique, 10, 130–9, 278–9, 304
  in Newton's *Opticks,* 37– 8
Friedman, Michael, 203, 291–3

God (*see also* Ideal of Pure Reason), 2–5, 19–24, 56, 57, 62, 131, 133, 144, 176, 190, 221, 230–60, 265, 283, 295–7
  ontological argument, 256–60
Guyer, Paul, 8, 52–3, 110, 115, 117, 122, 173, 180, 185, 189–95, 204, 266–72, 281, 293

Heimsoeth, Heinz, 74, 173–4
Horstmann, Rolph Peter, 269–74
Hume, David, 173, 293

Ideal of Pure Reason, 229, 230, 236–60
ideas of Reason
  deduction of, 130–9
  use in scientific theory, 294–301
  illusion, 1–4, 8, 10, 47, 57, 101, 105, 112, 117, 143, 165, 172–5, 179, 252, 256, 263, 278

ideas of Reason (*cont.*)
optical vs. transcendental, 99–139, 174, 178, 193, 214, 270, 273
Inaugural Dissertation, 32, 35, 45–66, 69, 70, 75, 77, 79, 86–98, 103–14, 130, 149, 191–9, 211, 247, 271, 272, 278, 304

Kemp Smith, Norman, 3, 9, 122, 127, 132–3, 166, 179–80, 185, 197–201, 215, 219, 231, 235, 241–4, 264, 268–72
Kitcher, Patricia, 3, 4, 9, 73, 148, 154–67, 272, 300
Kitcher, Phillip, 266

Lambert, Karel, 13, 44–8, 160
laws, in scientific theory, 263–301
Laywine, Alison, 19, 28–35, 39, 203
Leibniz, Gottfried, 17, 34, 71, 82, 94–8, 112, 154, 166, 172, 182–3, 188–91, 199–209, 215, 234, 258–9
Locke, John, 39, 50, 97–8, 103
logic, 8, 12, 58–9, 70–3, 103–5, 112, 119, 156
general vs. transcendental, 72–3, 134, 156–7
Longuenesse, Beatrice, 77, 237–52

Martin, Gottfried, 173, 205
Mendelssohn, Moses, 46

necessary being
in fourth antinomy, 218–29
in Ideal of Pure Reason, 229, 252–6
Newton, Issac, 17, 27, 37–8, 104–5, 172, 182–90, 197, 201–3, 208–9, 219, 291–3
Nieman, Susan, 117, 127, 269, 276
noumenal-phenomenal distinction (*see also* things in themselves/appearances), 69–100, 106, 113, 146, 159–60
Nova Dilucidatio, 18–25, 69–73, 122, 205, 235, 248, 270

object in general, 18, 84, 108, 119, 154, 160, 165
in the Transcendental Deduction, 6, 77, 83–4, 94, 134, 289
and the transcendental employment of the understanding, 69, 76–86, 91–9, 109
ontology, 8, 71, 74, 85, 117, 122, 204

paralogisms, 1, 143–75
first paralogism, 152–63
second paralogism, 164–9
third paralogism, 169–71
Pippin, Robert B., 6, 87, 119, 130–3, 145, 264, 266, 292
Plato, 130, 183, 199
principles of harmony, 57, 64, 69, 108, 272

rational cosmology (*see also* antinomies), 131, 172–229
rational psychology (*see also* the paralogisms), 131, 143–71
rational theology (*see also* Ideal of Pure Reason; Transcendental Ideal), 4, 9, 25, 230–60
reason, 3, 6, 12, 13, 111–17, 130, 172, 178, 229–30, 245, 264–78, 298
priciples of, 112–18
unity of, 119, 279–88
regulative principles, 163, 245, 265–6, 275–6

schematism, 71, 81–2, 91, 94, 157
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 198, 200, 215
sensibility, pretensions of, 93–100

soul, 131–6, 143–71, 176, 265
Spinoza, B., 82, 180, 221–7, 243
Strawson, P. F., 3, 4, 180, 190, 231–3, 264
subreption, fallacy of, 57–65, 105, 149, 239–47, 284
Swedenborg, Immanuel, 17–47
systematic unity, 6, 117, 120, 127, 178, 263–301
as aim of reason, 119
principle of, 121–5, 267–73
in scientific theory, 265–8, 288–94

things in themselves/appearances, 69, 77, 86–94, 151–3, 175–9, 187, 197, 204–10, 246, 278

Transcendental Deduction, 6, 7, 71, 77, 83, 94, 274, 281, 289
transcendental idealism, 9, 99, 134, 151, 182, 184, 193, 213, 266
transcendental realism, 98–116, 143, 151, 159, 172, 179–81, 191–3, 214

unconditioned, 131–9, 177–8
idea of, 137–9, 144–50

Walsh, W. H., 3, 4, 127, 180, 182, 201, 217, 244–9, 264–9
Wolff, Robert Paul, 17, 22, 30, 34, 45, 134, 205, 231
Wood, Allen, 4, 6, 9, 25, 127, 130, 158, 174, 231–43, 249–55, 278
world, 2–3, 34, 131, 137, 172–229, 265, 300